The Prince of India

Why Constantinople Fell

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Rise, too, ye Shapes and Shadows of the Past
Rise from your long forgotten grazes at last
Let us behold your faces, let us hear
The words you uttered in those days of fear
Revisit your familiar haunts again
The scenes of triumph and the scenes of pain
And leave the footprints of your bleeding feet
Once more upon the pavement of the street

LONGFELLOW

BOOK I

THE EARTH AND THE SEA ARE ALWAYS GIVING UP THEIR SECRETS THE PRINCE OF INDIA

CHAPTER I.

THE NAMELESS BAY

In the noon of a September day in the year of our dear Lord 1395, a merchant vessel nodded sleepily upon the gentle swells of warm water flowing in upon the Syrian coast. A modern seafarer, looking from the deck of one of the Messagerie steamers now plying the same line of trade, would regard her curiously, thankful to the calm which held her while he slaked his wonder, yet more thankful that he was not of her passage.

She could not have exceeded a hundred tons burthen. At the bow and stern she was decked, and those quarters were fairly raised. Amidship she was low and open, and pierced for twenty oars, ten to a side, all swaying listlessly from the narrow ports in which they were hung. Sometimes they knocked against each other. One sail, square and of a dingy white, drooped from a broad yard–arm, which was itself tilted, and now and then creaked against the yellow mast complainingly, unmindful of the simple tackle designed to keep it in control. A watchman crouched in the meagre shade of a fan–like structure overhanging the bow deck. The roofing and the floor, where exposed, were clean, even bright; in all other parts subject to the weather and the wash there was only the blackness of pitch. The steersman sat on a bench at the stern. Occasionally, from force of habit, he rested a hand upon the rudder–oar to be sure it was yet in reach. With exception of the two, the lookout and the steersman, all on board, officers, oarsmen, and sailors, were asleep—such confidence could a Mediterranean calm inspire in those accustomed to life on the beautiful sea. As if Neptune never became angry there, and blowing his conch, and smiting with his trident, splashed the sky with the yeast of waves! However, in 1395 Neptune had disappeared; like the great god Pan, he was dead.

The next remarkable thing about the ship was the absence of the signs of business usual with merchantmen. There were no barrels, boxes, bales, or packages visible. Nothing indicated a cargo. In her deepest undulations the water–line was not once submerged. The leather shields of the oar–ports were high and dry. Possibly she had passengers aboard. Ah, yes! There under the awning, stretched halfway across the deck dominated by the steersman, was a group of persons all unlike seamen. Pausing to note them, we may find the motive of the voyage.

Four men composed the group. One was lying upon a pallet, asleep yet restless. A black velvet cap had slipped from his head, giving freedom to thick black hair tinged with white. Starting from the temples, a beard with scarce a suggestion of gray swept in dark waves upon the neck and throat, and even invaded the pillow. Between the hair and beard there was a narrow margin of sallow flesh for features somewhat crowded by knots of wrinkle. His body was wrapped in a loose woollen gown of brownish–black. A hand, apparently all bone, rested upon the breast, clutching a fold of the gown. The feet twitched nervously in the loosened thongs of old–fashioned sandals. Glancing at the others of the group, it was plain this sleeper was master and they his slaves. Two of them were stretched on the bare boards at the lower end of the pallet, and they were white. The third was a son of Ethiopia of unmixed blood and gigantic frame. He sat at the left of the couch, cross–legged, and, like the rest, was in a doze; now and then, however, he raised his head, and, without fully opening his eyes, shook a fan of peacock feathers from head to foot over the recumbent figure. The two whites were clad in gowns of coarse linen belted to their waists; while, saving a cincture around his loins, the negro was naked.

There is often much personal revelation to be gleaned from the properties a man carries with him from home. Applying the rule here, by the pallet there was a walking–stick of unusual length, and severely hand–worn a little above the middle. In emergency it might have been used as a weapon. Three bundles loosely wrapped had been cast against a timber of the ship; presumably they contained the plunder of the slaves reduced to the minimum allowance of travel. But the most noticeable item was a leather roll of very ancient appearance, held by a number of broad straps

deeply stamped and secured by buckles of a metal blackened like neglected silver.

The attention of a close observer would have been attracted to this parcel, not so much by its antique showing, as by the grip with which its owner clung to it with his right hand. Even in sleep he held it of infinite consequence. It could not have contained coin or any bulky matter. Possibly the man was on some special commission, with his credentials in the old roll. Ay, who was he?

Thus started, the observer would have bent himself to study of the face; and immediately something would have suggested that while the stranger was of this period of the world he did not belong to it. Such were the magicians of the story–loving Al–Raschid. Or he was of the type Rabbinical that sat with Caiphas in judgment upon the gentle Nazarene. Only the centuries could have evolved the apparition. Who was he?

In the course of half an hour the man stirred, raised his head, looked hurriedly at his attendants, then at the parts of the ship in view, then at the steersman still dozing by the rudder; then he sat up, and brought the roll to his lap, whereat the rigor of his expression relaxed. The parcel was safe! And the conditions about him were as they should be!

He next set about undoing the buckles of his treasure. The long fingers were expert; but just when the roll was ready to open he lifted his face, and fixed his eyes upon the section of blue expanse outside the edge of the awning, and dropped into thought. And straightway it was settled that he was not a diplomatist or a statesman or a man of business of any kind. The reflection which occupied him had nothing to do with intrigues or statecraft; its centre was in his heart as the look proved. So, in tender moods, a father gazes upon his child, a husband at the beloved wife, restfully, lovingly.

And that moment the observer, continuing his study, would have forgotten the parcel, the white slaves, the gigantic negro, the self–willed hair and beard of pride—the face alone would have held him. The countenance of the Sphinx has no beauty now; and standing before it, we feel no stir of the admiration always a certificate that what we are

beholding is charming out of the common lines; yet we are drawn to it irresistibly, and by a wish vague, foolish—so foolish we would hesitate long before putting it in words to be heard by our best lover—a wish that the monster would tell us all about itself. The feeling awakened by the face of the traveller would have been similar, for it was distinctly Israelitish, with exaggerated eyes set deeply in cavernous hollows—a mobile mask, in fact, concealing a life in some way unlike other lives. Unlike? That was the very attraction. If the man would only speak, what a tale he could unfold!

But he did not speak. Indeed, he seemed to have regarded speech a weakness to be fortified against. Putting the pleasant thought aside, he opened the roll, and with exceeding tenderness of touch brought forth a sheet of vellum dry to brittleness, and yellow as a faded sycamore leaf. There were lines upon it as of a geometrical drawing, and an inscription in strange characters. He bent over the chart, if such it may be called, eagerly, and read it through; then, with a satisfied expression, he folded it back into the cover, rebuckled the straps, and placed the parcel under the pillow. Evidently the business drawing him was proceeding as he would have had it. Next he woke the negro with a touch. The black in salute bent his body forward, and raised his hands palm out, the thumbs at the forehead. Attention singularly intense settled upon his countenance; he appeared to listen with his soul. It was time for speech, yet the master merely pointed to one of the sleepers. The watchful negro caught the idea, and going to the man, aroused him, then resumed his place and posture by the pallet. The action revealed his proportions. He looked as if he could have lifted the gates of Gaza, and borne them easily away; and to the strength there were superadded the grace, suppleness, and softness of motion of a cat. One could not have helped thinking the slave might have all the elements to make him a superior agent in fields of bad as well as good.

The second slave arose, and waited respectfully. It would have been difficult to determine his nationality. He had the lean face, the high nose, sallow complexion, and low stature of an Armenian. His countenance was pleasant and intelligent. In addressing him, the master made signs with hand and finger; and they appeared sufficient, for the servant walked away

quickly as if on an errand. A short time, and he came back bringing a companion of the genus sailor, very red–faced, heavily built, stupid, his rolling gait unrelieved by a suggestion of good manners. Taking position before the black–gowned personage, his feet wide apart, the mariner said:

"You sent for me?"

The question was couched in Byzantine Greek.

"Yes," the passenger replied, in the same tongue, though with better accent. "Where are we?"

"But for this calm we should be at Sidon. The lookout reports the mountains in view."

The passenger reflected a moment, then asked, "Resorting to the oars, when can we reach the city?"

"By midnight."

"Very well. Listen now."

The speaker's manner changed; fixing his big eyes upon the sailor's lesser orbs, he continued:

"A few stadia north of Sidon there is what may be called a bay. It is about four miles across. Two little rivers empty into it, one on each side. Near the middle of the bend of the shore there is a well of sweet water, with flow enough to support a few villagers and their camels. Do you know the bay?"

The skipper would have become familiar.

"You are well acquainted with this coast," he said.

"Do you know of such a bay?" the passenger repeated.

"I have heard of it."

"Could you find it at night?"

"I believe so."

"That is enough. Take me into the bay, and land me at midnight. I will not go to the city. Get out all the oars now. At the proper time I will tell you what further I wish. Remember I am to be set ashore at midnight at a place which I will show you."

The directions though few were clear. Having given them, the passenger signed the negro to fan him, and stretched himself upon the pallet; and thenceforth there was no longer a question who was in control. It became the more interesting, however, to know the object of the landing at midnight on the shore of a lonesome unnamed bay.

CHAPTER II

THE MIDNIGHT LANDING

The skipper predicted like a prophet. The ship was in the bay, and it was midnight or nearly so; for certain stars had climbed into certain quarters of the sky, and after their fashion were striking the hour.

The passenger was pleased.

"You have done well," he said to the mariner. "Be silent now, and get close in shore. There are no breakers. Have the small boat ready, and do not let the anchors go."

The calm still prevailed, and the swells of the sea were scarce perceptible. Under the gentlest impulse of the oars the little vessel drifted broadside on until the keel touched the sands. At the same instant the small boat appeared. The skipper reported to the passenger. Going to each of the slaves, the latter signed them to descend. The negro swung himself down like a monkey, and received the baggage, which, besides the bundles already mentioned, consisted of some tools, notably a pick, a shovel, and a stout crowbar. An empty water–skin was also sent down, followed by a basket suggestive of food. Then the passenger, with a foot over the side of the vessel, gave his final directions.

"You will run now," he said to the skipper, who, to his credit, had thus far asked no questions, "down to the city, and lie there to–morrow, and to–morrow night. Attract little notice as possible. It is not necessary to pass the gate. Put out in time to be here at sunrise. I will be waiting for you. Day after to–morrow at sunrise—remember."

"But if you should not be here?" asked the sailor, thinking of extreme probabilities.

"Then wait for me," was the answer.

The passenger, in turn, descended to the boat, and was caught in the arms of the black, and seated carefully as he had been a child. In brief time the party was ashore, and the boat returning to the ship; a little later, the ship withdrew to where the night effectually curtained the deep.

The stay on the shore was long enough to apportion the baggage amongst the slaves. The master then led the way. Crossing the road running from Sidon along the coast to the up–country, they came to the foothills of the mountain, all without habitation.

Later they came upon signs of ancient life in splendor—broken columns, and here and there Corinthian capitals in marble discolored and sunk deeply in sand and mould. The patches of white on them had a ghastly glimmer in the starlight. They were approaching the site of an old city, a suburb probably of Palae–Tyre when she was one of the spectacles of the world, sitting by the sea to rule it regally far and wide.

On further a small stream, one of those emptying into the bay, had ploughed a ravine for itself across the route the party was pursuing. Descending to the water, a halt was made to drink, and fill the water–skin, which the negro took on his shoulder.

On further there was another ancient site strewn with fragments indicative of a cemetery. Hewn stones were frequent, and mixed with them were occasional entablatures and vases from which the ages had not yet entirely worn the fine chiselling. At length an immense uncovered sarcophagus barred the way. The master stopped by it to study the heavens; when he found the north star, he gave the signal to his followers, and moved under the trail of the steadfast beacon.

They came to a rising ground more definitely marked by sarcophagi hewn from the solid rock, and covered by lids of such weight and solidity that a number of them had never been disturbed. Doubtless the dead within were lying as they had been left—but when, and by whom? What disclosures there will be when at last the end is trumpeted in!

On further, but still connected with the once magnificent funeral site, they encountered a wall many feet thick, and shortway beyond it, on the mountain's side, there were two arches of a bridge of which all else had

been broken down; and these two had never spanned anything more substantial than the air. Strange structure for such a locality! Obviously the highway which once ran over it had begun in the city the better to communicate with the cemetery through which the party had just passed. So much was of easy understanding; but where was the other terminus? At sight of the arches the master drew a long breath of relief. They were the friends for whom he had been searching.

Nevertheless, without stopping, he led down into a hollow on all sides sheltered from view; and there the unloading took place. The tools and bundles were thrown down by a rock, and preparations made for the remainder of the night. The pallet was spread for the master. The basket gave up its contents, and the party refreshed themselves and slept the sleep of the weary.

The secluded bivouac was kept the next day. Only the master went forth in the afternoon. Climbing the mountain, he found the line in continuation of the bridge; a task the two arches serving as a base made comparatively easy. He stood then upon a bench or terrace cumbered with rocks, and so broad that few persons casually looking would have suspected it artificial. Facing fully about from the piers, he walked forward following the terrace which at places was out of line, and piled with debris tumbled from the mountain on the right hand side; in a few minutes that silent guide turned with an easy curve and disappeared in what had yet the appearance hardly distinguishable of an area wrenched with enormous labor from a low cliff of solid brown limestone.

The visitor scanned the place again and again; then he said aloud:

"No one has been here since"—

The sentence was left unfinished.

That he could thus identify the spot, and with such certainty pass upon it in relation to a former period, proved he had been there before.

Rocks, earth, and bushes filled the space. Picking footway through, he examined the face of the cliff then in front of him, lingering longest on the heap of breakage forming a bank over the meeting line of area and hill.

"Yes," he repeated, this time with undisguised satisfaction, "no one has been here since"—

Again the sentence was unfinished.

He ascended the bank next, and removed some of the stones at the top. A carved line in low relief on the face of the rock was directly exposed; seeing it he smiled, and replaced the stones, and descending, went back to the terrace, and thence to the slaves in bivouac.

From one of the packages he had two iron lamps of old Roman style brought out, and supplied with oil and wicks; then, as if everything necessary to his project was done, he took to the pallet. Some goats had come to the place in his absence, but no living creature else.

After nightfall the master woke the slaves, and made final preparation for the venture upon which he had come. The tools he gave to one man, the lamps to another, and the water–skin to the negro. Then he led out of the hollow, and up the mountain to the terrace visited in the afternoon; nor did he pause in the area mentioned as the abrupt terminus of the highway over the skeleton piers. He climbed the bank of stones covering the foot of the cliff up to the precise spot at which his reconnoissance had ended.

Directly the slaves were removing the bank at the top; not a difficult task since they had only to roll the loose stones down a convenient grade. They worked industriously. At length—in half an hour probably—an opening into the cliff was discovered. The cavity, small at first, rapidly enlarged, until it gave assurance of a doorway of immense proportions. When the enlargement sufficed for his admission, the master stayed the work, and passed in. The slaves followed. The interior descent offered a grade corresponding with that of the bank outside—another bank, in fact, of like composition, but more difficult to pass on account of the darkness.

With his foot the leading adventurer felt the way down to a floor; and when his assistants came to him, he took from a pocket in his gown a small case filled with a chemical powder which he poured at his feet; then he produced a flint and steel, and struck them together. Some sparks dropped upon the powder. Instantly a flame arose and filled the place with

a ruddy illumination. Lighting the lamps by the flame, the party looked around them, the slaves with simple wonder.

They were in a vault—a burial vault of great antiquity. Either it was an imitation of like chambers in Egypt, or they were imitations of it. The excavation had been done with chisels. The walls were niched, giving them an appearance of panelling, and over each of the niches there had been an inscription in raised letters, now mostly defaced. The floor was a confusion of fragments knocked from sarcophagi, which, massive as they were, had been tilted, overturned, uncovered, mutilated, and robbed. Useless to inquire whose the vandalism. It may have been of Chaldeans of the time of Almanezor, or of the Greeks who marched with Alexander, or of Egyptians who were seldom regardful of the dead of the peoples they overthrew as they were of their own, or of Saracens, thrice conquerors along the Syrian coast, or of Christians. Few of the Crusaders were like St. Louis.

But of all this the master took no notice. With him it was right that the vault should look the wreck it was. Careless of inscriptions, indifferent to carving, his eyes ran rapidly along the foot of the northern wall until they came to a sarcophagus of green marble. Thither he proceeded. He laid his hand upon the half–turned lid, and observing that the back of the great box—if such it may be termed—was against the wall, he said again:

"No one has been here since"—

And again the sentence was left unfinished.

Forthwith he became all energy. The negro brought the crowbar, and, by direction, set it under the edge of the sarcophagus, which he held raised while the master blocked it at the bottom with a stone chip. Another bite, and a larger chip was inserted. Good hold being thus had, a vase was placed for fulcrum; after which, at every downward pressure of the iron, the ponderous coffin swung round a little to the left. Slowly and with labor the movement was continued until the space behind was uncovered.

By this time the lamps had become the dependencies for light. With his in hand, the master stooped and inspected the exposed wall. Involuntarily the slaves bent forward and looked, but saw nothing different from the

general surface in that quarter. The master beckoned the negro, and touching a stone not wider than his three fingers, but reddish in hue, and looking like mere chinking lodged in an accidental crevice, signed him to strike it with the end of the bar. Once—twice—the stone refused to stir; with the third blow it was driven in out of sight, and, being followed vigorously, was heard to drop on the other side. The wall thereupon, to the height of the sarcophagus and the width of a broad door, broke, and appeared about to tumble down.

When the dust cleared away, there was a crevice unseen before, and wide enough to admit a hand. The reader must remember there were masons in the old time who amused themselves applying their mathematics to such puzzles. Here obviously the intention had been to screen an entrance to an adjoining chamber, and the key to the design had been the sliver of red granite first displaced.

A little patient use then of hand and bar enabled the workman to take out the first large block of the combination. That the master numbered with chalk, and had carefully set aside. A second block was taken out, numbered, and set aside; finally the screen was demolished, and the way stood open.

CHAPTER III

THE HIDDEN TREASURE

The slaves looked dubiously at the dusty aperture, which held out no invitation to them; the master, however, drew his robe closer about him, and stooping went in, lamp in hand. They then followed.

An ascending passage, low but of ample width, received them. It too had been chiselled from the solid rock. The wheel marks of the cars used in the work were still on the floor. The walls were bare but smoothly dressed. Altogether the interest here lay in expectation of what was to come; and possibly it was that which made the countenance of the master look so grave and absorbed. He certainly was not listening to the discordant echoes roused as he advanced.

The ascent was easy. Twenty–five or thirty steps brought them to the end of the passage.

They then entered a spacious chamber circular and domed. The light of the lamps was not enough to redeem the ceiling from obscurity; yet the master led without pause to a sarcophagus standing under the centre of the dome, and when he was come there everything else was forgotten by him.

The receptacle of the dead thus discovered had been hewn from the rock, and was of unusual proportions. Standing broadside to the entrance, it was the height of an ordinary man, and twice as long as high. The exterior had been polished smoothly as the material would allow; otherwise it was of absolute plainness, looking not unlike a dark brown box. The lid was a slab of the finest white marble carven into a perfect model of Solomon's Temple. While the master surveyed the lid he was visibly affected. He passed the lamp over it slowly, letting the light fall into the courts of the famous building; in like manner he illuminated the corridors, and the tabernacle; and, as he did so, his features trembled and his eyes were suffused. He walked around the exquisite representation several times,

pausing now and then to blow away the dust that had in places accumulated upon it. He noticed the effect of the transparent whiteness in the chamber; so in its day the original had lit up the surrounding world. Undoubtedly the model had peculiar hold upon his feelings.

But shaking the weakness off he after a while addressed himself to work. He had the negro thrust the edge of the bar under the lid, and raise it gently. Having thoughtfully provided himself in the antechamber with pieces of stone for the purpose, he placed one of them so as to hold the vantage gained. Slowly, then, by working at the ends alternately, the immense slab was turned upon its centre; slowly the hollow of the coffin was flooded with light; slowly, and with seeming reluctance, it gave up its secrets.

In strong contrast to the plainness of the exterior, the interior of the sarcophagus was lined with plates and panels of gold, on which there were cartoons chased and beaten in, representing ships, and tall trees, doubtless cedars of Lebanon, and masons at work, and two men armed and in royal robes greeting each other with clasped hands; and so beautiful were the cartoons that the eccentric medalleur, Cellini, would have studied them long, if not enviously. Yet he who now peered into the receptacle scarcely glanced at them.

On a stone chair seated was the mummy of a man with a crown upon its head, and over its body, for the most part covering—the linen wrappings, was a robe of threads of gold in ample arrangement. The hands rested on the lap; in one was a sceptre; the other held an inscribed silver tablet. There were rings plain, and rings with jewels in setting, circling the fingers and thumbs; the ears, ankles, even the great toes, were ornamented in like manner. At the feet a sword of the fashion of a cimeter had been laid. The blade was in its scabbard, but the scabbard was a mass of jewels, and the handle a flaming ruby. The belt was webbed with pearls and glistening brilliants. Under the sword were the instruments sacred then and ever since to Master Masons—a square, a gavel, a plummet, and an inscribing compass.

The man had been a king—so much the first glance proclaimed. With him, as with his royal brethren from the tombs along the Nile, death had asserted itself triumphantly over the embalmer. The cheeks were shrivelled and mouldy; across the forehead the skin was drawn tight; the temples were hollows rimmed abruptly with the frontal bones; the eyes, pits partially filled with dried ointments of a bituminous color. The monarch had yielded his life in its full ripeness, for the white hair and beard still adhered in stiffened plaits to the skull, cheeks, and chin. The nose alone was natural; it stood up thin and hooked, like the beak of an eagle.

At sight of the figure thus caparisoned and maintaining its seat in an attitude of calm composure the slaves drew back startled. The negro dropped his iron bar, making the chamber ring with a dissonant clangor.

Around the mummy in careful arrangement were vessels heaped with coins and pearls and precious stones, cut and ready for the goldsmith. Indeed, the whole inner space of the sarcophagus was set with basins and urns, each in itself a work of high art; and if their contents were to be judged by what appeared overflowing them, they all held precious stones of every variety. The corners had been draped with cloths of gold and cloths embroidered with pearls, some of which were now falling to pieces of their own weight.

We know that kings and queens are but men and women subject to the same passions of common people; that they are generous or sordid according to their natures; that there have been misers amongst them; but this one—did he imagine he could carry his amassments with him out of the world? Had he so loved the gems in his life as to dream he could illumine his tomb with them? If so, O royal idiot!

The master, when an opening had been made sufficiently wide by turning the lid upon the edge of the sarcophagus, took off his sandals, gave a foot to one of his slaves, and swung himself into the interior. The lamp was then given him, and he surveyed the wealth and splendor as the king might never again. And as the king in his day had said with exultation, Lo! it is all mine, the intruder now asserted title.

Unable, had he so wished, to carry the whole collection off, he looked around upon this and upon that, determining where to begin. Conscious he had nothing to fear, and least of all from the owner in the chair, he was slow and deliberate. From his robe he drew a number of bags of coarse hempen cloth, and a broad white napkin. The latter he spread upon the floor, first removing several of the urns to obtain space; then he emptied one of the vessels upon it, and from the sparkling and varicolored heap before him proceeded to make selection.

His judgment was excellent, sure and swift. Not seldom he put the large stones aside, giving preference to color and lustre. Those chosen he dropped into a bag. When the lot was gone through, he returned the rejected to the vessel, placing it back exactly in its place. Then he betook himself to another of the vessels, and then another, until, in course of a couple of hours, he had made choice from the collection, and filled nine bags, and tied them securely.

Greatly relieved, he arose, rubbed the benumbed joints of his limbs awhile, then passed the packages out to the slaves. The occupation had been wearisome and tensive; but it was finished, and he would now retire. He lingered to give a last look at the interior, muttering the sentence again, and leaving it unfinished as before:

"No one has been here since"—

From the face of the king, his eyes fell to the silver tablet in the nerveless hand. Moving close, and holding the lamp in convenient position, he knelt and read the inscription.

I.

"There is but one God, and He was from the beginning, and will be without end."

II.

"In my lifetime, I prepared this vault and tomb to receive my body, and keep it safely; yet it may be visited, for the earth and sea are always giving up their secrets."

III.

"Therefore, O Stranger, first to find me, know thou!"

"That in all my days I kept intercourse with Solomon, King of the Jews, wisest of men, and the richest and greatest. As is known, he set about building a house to his Lord God, resolved that there should be nothing like it in the world, nothing so spacious, so enriched, so perfect in proportions, so in all things becoming the glory of his God. In sympathy with him I gave him of the skill of my people, workers in brass, and silver, and gold, and products of the quarries: and in their ships my sailors brought him the yield of mines from the ends of the earth. At last the house was finished; then he sent me the model of the house, and the coins, and cloths of gold and pearl, and the precious stones, and the vessels holding them, and the other things of value here. Ad if, O Stranger, thou dost wonder at the greatness of the gift, know thou that it was but a small part of what remained unto him of like kind, for he was master of the earth, and of everything belonging to it which might be of service to him, even the elements and their subtleties."

IV.

"Nor think, O Stranger, that I have taken the wealth into the tomb with me, imagining it can serve me in the next life. I store it here because I love him who gave it to me, and am jealous of his love; and that is all."

V.

"So thou wilt use the wealth in ways pleasing in the sight of the Lord God of Solomon, my royal friend, take thou of it in welcome. There is no God but his God!"

"Thus say I—HIRAM, KING OF TYRE."

"Rest thou thy soul, O wisest of pagan kings," said the master, rising. "Being the first to find thee here, and basing my title to thy wealth on that circumstance, I will use it in a way pleasing in the sight of the Lord God of Solomon. Verily, verily, there is no God but his God!"

This, then, was the business that brought the man to the tomb of the king whose glory was to have been the friend of Solomon. Pondering the idea, we begin to realize how vast the latter's fame was; and it ceases to be

matter of wonder that his contemporaries, even the most royal, could have been jealous of his love.

Not only have we the man's business, but it is finished; and judging from the satisfaction discernible on his face as he raised the lamp and turned to depart, the result must have been according to his best hope. He took off his robe, and tossed it to his slaves; then he laid a hand upon the edge of the sarcophagus preparatory to climbing out. At the moment, while giving a last look about him, an emerald, smoothly cut, and of great size, larger indeed than a full–grown pomegranate, caught his eyes in its place loose upon the floor. He turned back, and taking it up, examined it carefully; while thus engaged his glance dropped to the sword almost at his feet. The sparkle of the brilliants, and the fire–flame of the great ruby in the grip, drew him irresistibly, and he stood considering.

Directly he spoke in a low voice:

"No one has been here since"—

He hesitated—glanced hurriedly around to again assure himself it was not possible to be overheard—then finished the sentence:

"No one has been here *since I came a thousand years ago*."

At the words so strange, so inexplicable upon any theory of nature and common experience, the lamp shook in his hand. Involuntarily he shrank from the admission, though to himself. But recovering, he repeated:

"Since I came a thousand years ago."

Then he added more firmly:

"But the earth and the sea are always giving up their secrets. So saith the good King Hiram; and since I am a witness proving the wisdom of the speech, I at least must believe him. Wherefore it is for me to govern myself as if another will shortly follow me. The saying of the king is an injunction."

With that, he turned the glittering sword over and over admiringly. Loath to let it go, he drew the blade partly from the scabbard, and its clearness had the depth peculiar to the sky between stars at night.

"Is there anything it will not buy," he continued, reflectively. "What king could refuse a sword once Solomon's? I will take it."

Thereupon he passed both the emerald and the sword out to the slaves, whom he presently joined.

The conviction, but a moment before expressed, that another would follow him to the tomb of the venerated Tyrian, was not strong enough to hinder the master from attempting to hide every sign which might aid in the discovery. The negro, under his direction, returned the lid exactly to its former fitting place on the sarcophagus; the emerald and the sword he wrapped in his gown; the bags and the tools were counted and distributed among the slaves for easy carriage. Lamp in hand, he then walked around to see that nothing was left behind. Incidentally he even surveyed the brown walls and the dim dome overhead. Having reached the certainty that everything was in its former state, he waved his hand, and with one long look backward at the model, ghostly beautiful in its shining white transparency, he led the way to the passage of entrance, leaving the king to his solitude and stately sleep, unmindful of the visitation and the despoilment.

Out in the large reception room, he paused again to restore the wall. Beginning with the insignificant key, one by one the stones, each of which, as we have seen, had been numbered by him, were raised and reset. Then handfuls of dust were collected and blown into the slight crevices till they were invisible. The final step was the restoration of the sarcophagus; this done, the gallery leading to the real vault of the king was once more effectually concealed.

"He who follows, come he soon or late, must have more than sharp eyes if he would have audience with Hiram, my royal friend of Tyre," the adventurer said, in his meditative way, feeling at the same time in the folds of his gown for the chart so the object of solicitude on the ship. The roll, the emerald, and the sword were also safe. Signing the slaves to remain where they were, he moved slowly across the chamber, and by aid of his lamp surveyed an aperture there so broad and lofty it was suggestive of a gate rather than a door.

"It is well," he said, smiling. "The hunter of spoils, hereafter as heretofore, will pass this way instead of the other."

The remark was shrewd. Probably nothing had so contributed to the long concealment of the gallery just reclosed the second time in a thousand years as the high doorway, with its invitation to rooms beyond it, all now in iconoclastic confusion.

Rejoining his workmen, he took a knife from the girdle of one of them, and cut a slit in the gurglet large enough to admit the bags of precious stones. The skin was roomy, and received them, though with the loss of much of the water. Having thus disposed of that portion of the plunder to the best advantage both for portage and concealment, he helped swing it securely upon the negro's shoulder, and without other delay led from the chamber to the great outdoors, where the lamps were extinguished.

The pure sweet air, as may be imagined, was welcome to every one. While the slaves stood breathing it in wholesome volumes, the master studied the stars, and saw the night was not so far gone but that, with industry, the sea–shore could be made in time for the ship.

Still pursuing the policy of hiding the road to the tomb much as possible, he waited while the men covered the entrance as before with stones brought up from the bank. A last survey of the face of the rock, minute as the starlight allowed, reassured him that, as to the rest of the world, the treasure might remain with its ancient owner undisturbed for yet another thousand years, if not forever; after which, in a congratulatory mood, he descended the mountain side to the place of bivouac, and thence in good time, and without adventure, arrived at the landing by the sea. There the negro, wading far out, flung the tools into the water.

In the appointed time the galley came down from the city, and, under impulsion of the oars, disappeared with the party up the coast northward.

The negro unrolled the pallet upon the deck, and brought some bread, Smyrna figs, and wine of Prinkipo, and the four ate and drank heartily.

The skipper was then summoned.

"You have done well, my friend," said the master. "Spare not sail or oar now, but make Byzantium without looking into any wayside port. I will increase your pay in proportion as you shorten the time we are out. Look to it—go—and speed you."

Afterward the slaves in turn kept watch while he slept. And though the coming and going of sailors was frequent, not one of them noticed the oil–stained water–skin cast carelessly near the master's pillow, or the negro's shaggy half–cloak, serving as a wrap for the roll, the emerald, and the sword once Solomon's.

The run of the galley from the nameless bay near Sidon was without stop or so much as a headwind. Always the blue sky above the deck, and the blue sea below. In daytime the master passenger would occasionally pause in his walk along the white planks, and, his hand on the gunwale, give a look at some of the landmarks studding the ancient Cycladean Sea, an island here, or a tall promontory of the continent yonder, possibly an Olympian height faintly gray in the vaster distance. His manner at such moments did not indicate a traveller new to the highway. A glance at the points such as business men closely pressed give the hands on the face of a clock to determine the minute of the hour, and he would resume walking. At night he slept right soundly.

From the Dardanelles into the Hellespont; then the Marmora. The captain would have coasted, but the passenger bade him keep in the open. "There is nothing to fear from the weather," he said, "but there is time to be saved."

In an afternoon they sighted the great stones Oxia and Plati; the first, arid and bare as a gray egg, and conical like an irregular pyramid; the other, a plane on top, with verdure and scattering trees. A glance at the map shows them the most westerly group of the Isles of the Princes.

Now Nature is sometimes stupid, sometimes whimsical, doing unaccountable things. One gazing at the other isles of the group from a softly rocking caique out a little way on the sea divines instantly that she meant them for summer retreats, but these two, Oxia and Plati, off by themselves, bleak in winter, apparently always ready for spontaneous

combustion in the heated months, for what were they designed? No matter —uses were found for them—fitting uses. Eremites in search of the hardest, grimmest places, selected Oxia, and pecking holes and caves in its sides, shared the abodes thus laboriously won with cormorants, the most gluttonous of birds. In time a rude convent was built near the summit. On the other hand, Plati was converted into a Gehenna for criminals, and in the vats and dungeons with which it was provided, lives were spent weeping for liberty. On this isle, tears and curses; on that, tears and prayers.

At sundown the galley was plying its oars between Oxia and the European shore about where St. Stephano is now situated. The dome of Sta. Sophia was in sight; behind it, in a line to the northwest, arose the tower of Galata. "Home by lamplighting—Blessed be the Virgin!" the mariners said to each other piously. But no! The master passenger sent for the captain.

"I do not care to get into harbor before morning. The night is delicious, and I will try it in the small boat. I was once a rower, and yet have a fancy for the oars. Do thou lay off and on hereabouts. Put two lamps at the masthead that I may know thy vessel when I desire to return. Now get out the boat."

The captain thought his voyager queer of taste; nevertheless he did as told. In a short time the skiff—if the familiar word can be pardoned— put off with the negro and his master, the latter at the oars.

In preparation for the excursion the gurglet half full of water and the sheepskin mantle of the black man were lowered into the little vessel. The boat moved away in the direction of Prinkipo, the mother isle of the group; and as the night deepened, it passed from view.

When out of sight from the galley's deck, the master gave the rowing to the negro, and taking seat by the rudder, changed direction to the southeast; after which he kept on and on, until Plati lay directly in his course.

The southern extremity of Plati makes quite a bold bluff. In a period long gone a stone tower had been constructed there, a lookout and shelter

for guardsmen on duty; and there being no earthly chance of escape for prisoners, so securely were they immured, the duty must have been against robbers from the mainland on the east, and from pirates generally. Under the tower there was a climb difficult for most persons in daylight, and from the manoeuvring of the boat, the climb was obviously the object drawing the master. He at length found it, and stepped out on a shelving stone. The gurglet and mantle were passed to him, and soon he and his follower were feeling their way upward.

On the summit, the chief walked once around the tower, now the merest ruin, a tumbledown without form, in places overgrown with sickly vines. Rejoining his attendant, and staying a moment to thoroughly empty the gurglet of water, on his hands and knees he crawled into a passage much obstructed by debris. The negro waited outside.

The master made two trips; the first one, he took the gurglet in; the second, he took the mantle wrapping the sword. At the end, he rubbed his hands in self–congratulation.

"They are safe—the precious stones of Hiram, and the sword of Solomon! Three other stores have I like this one—in India, in Egypt, in Jerusalem—and there is the tomb by Sidon. Oh, I shall not come to want!" and he laughed well pleased.

The descent to the small boat was effected without accident.

Next morning toward sunrise the passengers disembarked at Port St. Peter on the south side of the Golden Horn. A little later the master was resting at home in Byzantium.

Within three days the mysterious person whom we, wanting his proper name and title, have termed the master, had sold his house and household effects. In the night of the seventh day, with his servants, singular in that all of them were deaf and dumb, he went aboard ship, and vanished down the Marmora, going no one but himself knew whither.

The visit to the tomb of the royal friend of Solomon had evidently been to provide for the journey; and that he took precious stones in preference to gold and silver signified a journey indefinite as to time and place.

BOOK II

THE PRINCE OF INDIA

CHAPTER I

A MESSENGER FROM CIPANGO

Just fifty–three years after the journey to the tomb of the Syrian king—more particularly on the fifteenth day of May, fourteen hundred and forty–eight—a man entered one of the stalls of a market in Constantinople—to–day the market would be called a bazaar—and presented a letter to the proprietor.

The Israelite thus honored delayed opening the linen envelope while he surveyed the messenger. The liberty, it must be remarked, was not a usual preliminary in the great city, the cosmopolitanism of which had been long established; that is to say, a face, a figure, or a mode, to gain a second look from one of its denizens, had then, as it has now, to be grossly outlandish. In this instance the owner of the stall indulged a positive stare. He had seen, he thought, representatives of all known nationalities, but never one like the present visitor—never one so pinkish in complexion, and so very bias–eyed—never one who wrapped and re–wrapped himself in a single shawl so entirely, making it answer all the other vestments habitual to men. The latter peculiarity was more conspicuous in consequence of a sack of brown silk hanging loosely from the shoulder, with leaves and flowers done in dazzling embroidery down the front and around the edges. And then the slippers were of silk not less rich with embroidery, while over the bare head a sunshade of bamboo and paper brilliantly painted was carried.

Too well bred to persist in the stare or attempt to satisfy his curiosity by a direct question, the proprietor opened the letter, and began reading it. His neighbors less considerate ran together, and formed a crowd around the stranger, who nevertheless bore the inspection composedly, apparently unconscious of anything to make him such a cynosure.

The paper which the removal of the envelope gave to the stall–keeper's hand excited him the more. The delicacy of its texture, its softness to the touch, its semi–transparency, were unlike anything he had ever seen; it was not only foreign, but very foreign.

The lettering, however, was in Greek plainly done. He noticed first the date; then, his curiosity becoming uncontrollable, and the missive being of but one sheet, his eyes dropped to the place of signature. There was no name there—only a seal—an impression on a surface of yellow wax of the drooping figure of a man bound to a cross.

[Illustration]

At sight of the seal his eyes opened wider. He drew a long breath to quiet a rising feeling, half astonishment, half awe. Retreating to a bench near by, he seated himself, and presently became unmindful of the messenger, of the crowd, of everything, indeed, except the letter and the matters of which it treated.

The demand of the reader for a sight of the paper which could produce such an effect upon a person who was not more than an ordinary dealer in an Eastern market may by this time have become imperious; wherefore it is at once submitted in free translation. Only the date is modernized.

"ISLAND IN THE OVER–SEA. FAR EAST. *May* 15, A.D. 1447."

"Uel, Son of Jahdai."

"Peace to thee and all thine!"

"If thou hast kept faithfully the heirlooms of thy progenitors, somewhere in thy house there is now a duplication of the seal which thou wilt find hereto attached; only that one is done in gold. The reference is to prove to thee a matter I am pleased to assert, knowing it will at least put thee upon inquiry—I knew thy father, thy grandfather, and his father, and others of thy family further back than it is wise for me to declare; and I loved them, for they were a virtuous and goodly race, studious to do the will of the Lord God of Israel, and acknowledging no other; therein manifesting the chiefest of human excellences. To which, as more directly personal to thyself, I will add that qualities of men, like qualities in plants, are transmissible, and go they unmixed through many generations, they make

a kind. Therefore, at this great distance, and though I have never looked into thy face, or touched thy hand, or heard thy voice, I know thee, and give thee trust confidently. The son of thy father cannot tell the world what he has of me here, or that there is a creature like unto me living, or that he has to do with me in the least; and as the father would gladly undertake my requests, even those I now reveal unto thee, not less willingly will his son undertake them. Refusal would be the first step toward betrayal."

"With this preface, O Son of Jahdai, I write without fear, and freely; imparting, first, that it is now fifty years since I set foot upon the shores of this Island, which, for want of a name likely to be known to thee, I have located and described as 'In the Over–Sea. Far East.' Its people are by nature kindly disposed to strangers, and live simply and affectionately. Though they never heard of the Nazarene whom the world persists in calling the Christ, it is truth to say they better illustrate his teachings, especially in their dealings with each other, than the so–called Christians amongst whom thy lot is cast. Withal, however, I have become weary, the fault being more in myself than in them. Desire for change is the universal law. Only God is the same yesterday, to–day, and to–morrow eternally. So I am resolved to seek once more the land of our fathers and Jerusalem, for which I yet have tears. In her perfection, she was more than beautiful; in her ruin, she is more than sacred."

"In the execution of my design, know thou next, O Son of Jahdai, that I despatch my servant, Syama, intrusting him to deliver this letter. When it is put into thy hand, note the day, and see if it be not exactly one year from this 15 May, the time I have given him to make the journey, which is more by sea than land. Thou mayst then know I am following him, though with stoppages of uncertain duration; it being necessary for me to cross from India to Mecca; thence to Kash–Cush, and down the Nile to Cairo. Nevertheless I hope to greet thee in person within six months after Syama hath given thee this report."

"The sending a courier thus in advance is with a design of which I think it of next importance to inform thee."

"It is my purpose to resume residence in Constantinople; for that, I must have a house. Syama, amongst other duties in my behalf, is charged to purchase and furnish one, and have it ready to receive me when I arrive. The day is long passed since a Khan had attractions for me. Much more agreeable is it to think my own door will open instantly at my knock. In this affair thou canst be of service which shall be both remembered and gratefully recompensed. He hath no experience in the matter of property in thy city; thou hast; it is but natural, therefore, if I pray thou bring it into practice by assisting him in the selection, in perfecting the title, and in all else the project may require doing; remembering only that the tenement be plain and comfortable, not rich; for, alas! the time is not yet when the children of Israel may live conspicuously in the eye of the Christian world."

"Thou wilt find Syama shrewd and of good judgment, older than he seemeth, and quick to render loyalty for my sake. Be advised also that he is deaf and dumb; yet, if in speaking thou turn thy face to him, and use the Greek tongue, he will understand thee by the motion of thy lips, and make answer by signs."

"Finally, be not afraid to accept this commission on account of pecuniary involvement. Syama hath means of procuring all the money he may require, even to extravagance; at the same time he is forbidden to contract a debt, except it be to thee for kindness done, all which he will report to me so I may pay them fitly."

"In all essential things Syama hath full instructions; besides, he is acquainted with my habits and tastes; wherefore I conclude this writing by saying I hope thou wilt render him aid as indicated, and that when I come thou wilt allow me to relate myself to thee as father to son, in all things a help, in nothing a burden."

"Again, O Son of Jahdai, to thee and thine—Peace!"

[Seal.]

The son of Jahdai, at the conclusion of the reading, let his hands fall heavily in his lap, while he plunged into a study which the messenger with his foreign airs could not distract.

Very great distance is one of the sublimities most powerful over the imagination. The letter had come from an Island he had never heard named. An Island in the Over–Sea which doubtless washed the Eastern end of the earth, wherever that might be. And the writer! How did he get there? And what impelled him to go?

A chill shot the thinker's nerves. He suddenly remembered that in his house there was a cupboard in a wall, with two shelves devoted to storage of heirlooms; on the upper shelf lay the *torah* of immemorial usage in his family; the second contained cups of horn and metal, old phylacteries, amulets, and things of vertu in general, and of such addition and multiplication through the ages that he himself could not have made a list of them; in fact, now his attention was aroused, he recalled them a mass of colorless and formless objects which had ceased to have history or value. Amongst them, however, a seal in the form of a medallion in gold recurred to him; but whether the impression upon it was raised or sunken he could not have certainly said; nor could he have told what the device was. His father and grandfather had esteemed it highly, and the story they told him about it divers times when he was a child upon their knees he could repeat quite substantially.

A man committed an indignity to Jesus the pretended *Christ*, who, in punishment, condemned him to linger on the earth until in the fulness of time he should come again; and the man had gone on living through the centuries. Both the father and grandfather affirmed the tale to be true; they had known the unfortunate personally; yet more, they declared he had been an intimate of the family, and had done its members through generations friendlinesses without number; in consequence they had come to consider him one of them in love. They had also said that to their knowledge it was his custom to pray for death regularly as the days came and went. He had repeatedly put himself in its way; yet curiously it passed him by, until he at last reached a conviction he could not die.

Many years had gone since the stall–keeper last heard the tale, and still more might have been counted since the man disappeared, going no one knew whither.

But he was not dead! He was coming again! It was too strange to believe! It could not be! Yet one thing was clear—whatever the messenger might be, or presuming him a villain, whatever the lie he thought to make profitable, appeal could be safely and cheaply made to the seal in the cupboard. As a witness it, too, was deaf and dumb; on its face nevertheless there was revelation and the truth.

Through the momentary numbness of his faculties so much the son of Jahdai saw, and he did not wait. Signing the messenger to follow, he passed into a closet forming part of the stall, and the two being alone, he spoke in Greek.

"Be thou seated here," he said, "and wait till I return."

The messenger smiled and bowed, and took seat; thereupon Uel drew his turban down to his ears, and, letter in hand, started home.

His going was rapid; sometimes he almost ran. Acquaintances met him on the street, but he did not see them; if they spoke to him, he did not hear. Arrived at his own door, he plunged into the house as if a mob were at his heels. Now he was before the cupboard! Little mercy the phylacteries and amulets, the bridle–spanglery of donkeys, the trinketry of women, his ancestresses once famous for beauty or many children— little mercy the motley collection on the second shelf received from his hands. He tossed them here and there, and here and there again, but the search was vain. Ah, good Lord! was the medalet lost? And of all times, then?

The failure made him the more anxious; his hands shook while he essayed the search once more; and he reproached himself. The medal was valuable for its gold, and besides it was a sacred souvenir. Conscience stung him. Over and over he shifted and turned the various properties on the shelf, the last time systematically and with fixed attention. When he stopped to rest, the perspiration stood on his forehead in large drops, and he fairly wrung his hands, crying, "It is not here—it is lost! My God, how shall I know the truth now!"

At this pause it is to be said that the son of Jahdai was wifeless. The young woman whom he had taken as helpmeet in dying had left him a girl baby who, at the time of our writing, was about thirteen years old. Under

the necessity thus imposed, he found a venerable daughter of Jerusalem to serve him as housekeeper, and charge herself with care of the child. Now he thought of that person; possibly she knew where the seal was. He turned to seek her, and as he did so, the door of an adjoining room opened, and the child appeared.

He held her very dear, because she had the clear olive complexion of her mother, and the same soft black eyes with which the latter used to smile upon him in such manner that words were never required to assure him of her love. And the little one was bright and affectionate, and had prettinesses in speech, and sang low and contentedly the day long. Often as he took her on his lap and studied her fondly, he was conscious she promised to be gentle and beautiful as the departed one; beyond which it never occurred to him there could be superior excellences.

Distressed as the poor man was, he took the child in his arms, and kissed her on the round cheek, and was putting her down when he saw the medal at her throat, hanging from a string. She told him the housekeeper had given it to her as a plaything. Untied at last—for his impatience was nigh uncontrollable—he hurried with the recovered treasure to a window, to look at the device raised upon it; then, his heart beating rapidly, he made comparison with the impression sunk in the yellow wax at the foot of the letter; he put them side by side—there could be no mistake—the impression on the wax might have been made by the medallion!

Let it not be supposed now that the son of Jahdai did not appreciate the circumstance which had befallen. The idea of a man suffering a doom so strange affected him, while the doom itself, considered as a judgment, was simply awful; but his thought did not stop there—it carried him behind both the man and the doom. Who was He with power by a word, not merely to change the most fixed of the decrees of nature, but, by suspending it entirely, hold an offending wretch alive for a period already encroaching upon the eternal? One less firmly rooted in the faith of his fathers would have stood aghast at the conclusion to which the answer as an argument led—a conclusion admitting no escape once it was reached. The affair in hand, however, despite its speculative side, was real and

urgent; and the keeper of the stall, remembering the messenger in half imprisonment, fell to thinking of the practical questions before him; first of which was the treatment he should accord his correspondent's requests.

This did not occupy him long. His father, he reflected, would have received the stranger cordially, and as became one of such close intimacy; so should he. The requests were easy, and carried no pecuniary liability with them; he was merely to aid an inexperienced servant in the purchase of a dwelling–house, the servant having plenty of funds. True, when the master presented himself in person, it would be necessary to determine exactly the footing to be accorded him; but for the present that might be deferred. If, in the connection, the son of Jahdai dwelt briefly upon possible advantages to himself, the person being presumably rich and powerful, it was human, and he is to be excused for it.

The return to the market was less hurried than the going from it. There Uel acted promptly. He took Syama to his house, and put him into the guest–chamber, assuring him it was a pleasure. Yet when night came he slept poorly. The incidents of the day were mixed with much that was unaccountable, breaking the even tenor of his tradesman's life by unwonted perplexities. He had not the will to control his thoughts; they would go back to the excitement of the moment when he believed the medallion lost; and as points run together in the half–awake state on very slender threads, he had a vision of a mysterious old man coming into his house, and in some way taking up and absorbing the life of his child. When the world at last fell away and left him asleep, it was with a dread tapping heavily at his heart.

The purchase which Uel was requested to assist in making proved a light affair. After diligent search through the city, Syama decided to take a two–story house situated in a street running along the foot of the hill to–day crowned by the mosque Sultan Selim, although it was then the site of an unpretentious Christian church. Besides a direct eastern frontage, it was in the divisional margin between the quarters of the Greeks, which were always clean, and those of the Jews, which were always filthy. It was also observed that neither the hill nor the church obstructed the western view

from the roof; that is to say, it was so far around the upper curve of the hill that a thistle–down would be carried by a south–east wind over many of the proudest Greek residences and dropped by the Church of the Holy Virgin on Blacherne, or in the imperial garden behind the Church. In addition to these advantages, the son of Jahdai was not unmindful that his own dwelling, a small but comfortable structure also of wood, was just opposite across the street. Everything considered, the probabilities were that Syama's selection would prove satisfactory to his master. The furnishment was a secondary matter.

It is to be added that in course of the business there were two things from which Uel extracted great pleasure; Syama always had money to pay promptly for everything he bought; in the next place, communication with him was astonishingly easy. His eyes made up for the deficiency in hearing; while his signs, gestures, and looks were the perfection of pantomime. Of evenings the child never tired watching him in conversation.

While we go now to bring the Wanderer up, it should not be forgotten that the house, completely furnished, is awaiting him, and he has only to knock at the door, enter, and be at home.

CHAPTER II

THE PILGRIM AT EL KATIF

The bay of Bahrein indents the western shore of the Persian Gulf. Hard by the point on the north at which it begins its inland bend rise the whitewashed, one–story mud–houses of the town El Katif. Belonging to the Arabs, the most unchangeable of peoples, both the town and the bay were known in the period of our story by their present names.

The old town in the old time derived importance chiefly from the road which, leading thence westwardly through Hejr Yemameh, brought up, after many devious stretches across waterless wastes of sand, at El Derayeh, a tented capital of the Bedouins, and there forked, one branch going to Medina, the other to Mecca. In other words, El Katif was to Mecca on the east the gate Jeddo was to it on the west.

When, in annual recurrence, the time for the indispensable Hajj, or Pilgrimage, came, the name of the town was on the lips of men and women beyond the Green Sea, and southwardly along the coast of Oman, and in the villages and dowars back of the coast under the peaks of Akdar, only a little less often than those of the holy cities. Then about the first of July the same peoples as pilgrims from Irak, Afghanistan, India, and beyond those countries even, there being an East and a Far East, and pilgrims from Arabia, crowded together, noisy, quarrelsome, squalid, accordant in but one thing—a determination to make the Hajj lest they might die as Jews or Christians.

The law required the pilgrim to be at Mecca in the month of Ramazan, the time the Prophet himself had become a pilgrim. From El Katif the direct journey might be made in sixty days, allowing an average march of twelve miles. By way of Medina, it could be made to permit the votary to be present and participate in the observances usual on the day of the Mysterious Night of Destiny.

The journey moreover was attended with dangers. Winds, drouth, sand storms beset the way; and there were beasts always hungry, and robbers always watchful. The sun beat upon the hills, curtained the levels with mirage, and in the *fiumuras* kindled invisible fires; so in what the unacclimated breathed and in what they drank of the waters of the land there were diseases and death.

The Prophet having fixed the month of Ramazan for the Hajj, pilgrims accustomed themselves to assemblage at Constantinople, Damascus, Cairo and Bagdad. If they could not avoid the trials of the road, they could lessen them. Borrowing the term caravan as descriptive of the march, they established markets at all convenient places.

This is the accounting for one of the notable features of El Katif from the incoming of June till the caravan extended itself on the road, and finally disappeared in the yellow farness of the Desert. One could not go amiss for purveyors in general. Dealers in horses, donkeys, camels, and dromedaries abounded. The country for miles around appeared like a great stock farm. Herds overran the lean earth. Makers of harness, saddles, box–houdahs, and swinging litters of every variety and price, and contractors of camels, horses, and trains complete did not wait to be solicited; the competition between them was too lively for dignity. Hither and thither shepherds drove fatted sheep in flocks, selling them on the hoof. In shady places sandal merchants and clothiers were established; while sample tents spotted the whole landscape. Hucksters went about with figs, dates, dried meats and bread. In short, pilgrims could be accommodated with every conceivable necessary. They had only to cry out, and the commodity was at hand.

Amongst the thousands who arrived at El Katif in the last of June, 1448, was a man whose presence made him instantly an object of general interest. He came from the south in a galley of eight oars manned by Indian seamen, and lay at anchor three days before landing. His ship bore nothing indicative of nationality except the sailors. She was trim–looking and freshly painted; otherwise there was nothing uncommon in her appearance. She was not for war—that was plain. She floated too lightly to

be laden; wherefore those who came to look at her said she could not be in commercial service.

Almost before furling sail, an awning was stretched over her from bow to stern—an awning which from the shore appeared one great shawl of variegated colors. Thereupon the wise in such matters decided the owner was an Indian Prince vastly rich, come, like a good Mohammedan, to approve his faith by pilgrimage.

This opinion the stranger's conduct confirmed. While he did not himself appear ashore, he kept up a busy communication by means of his small boat. For three days, it carried contractors of camels and supplies aboard, and brought them back.

They described him of uncertain age; he might be sixty, he might be seventy–five. While rather under medium height, he was active and perfectly his own master. He sat in the shade of the awning cross–legged. His rug was a marvel of sheeny silk. He talked Arabic, but with an Indian accent. His dress was Indian—a silken shirt, a short jacket, large trousers, and a tremendous white turban on a red tarbousche, held by an aigrette in front that was a dazzle of precious stones such as only a Rajah could own. His attendants were few, but they were gorgeously attired, wore *shintyan* swung in rich belts from their shoulders, and waited before him speechless and in servile posture. One at his back upheld an umbrella of immense spread. He indulged few words, and they were strictly business. He wanted a full outfit for the Hajj; could the contractor furnish him twenty camels of burden, and four swift dromedaries? Two of the latter were to carry a litter for himself; the other two were for his personal attendants, whom he desired furnished with well–shaded *shugdufs*. The camels he would load with provisions. While speaking, he would keep his eyes upon the person addressed with an expression uncomfortably searching. Most extraordinary, however, he did not once ask about prices.

One of the Shaykhs ventured an inquiry.

"How great will his Highness' suite be?"

"Four."

The Shaykh threw up his hands.

"O Allah! Four dromedaries and twenty camels for four men!"

"Abuser of the salt," said the stranger calmly, "hast thou not heard of the paschal charity, and of the fine to the poor? Shall I go empty handed to the most sacred of cities?"

Finally an agent was found who, in concert with associates, undertook to furnish the high votary with all he asked complete.

The morning of the fourth day after his arrival the Indian was pulled ashore, and conducted out of town a short distance to where, on a rising ground, a camp had been set up provisionally for his inspection. There were tents, one for storage of goods and provisions; one for the suite; one for the chief Shaykh, the armed guards, the tent pitchers, and the camel drivers; and a fourth one, larger than the others, for the Prince himself. With the dromedaries, camels, and horses, the camp was accepted; then, as was the custom, the earnest money was paid. By set of sun the baggage was removed from the ship, and its partition into cargoes begun. The Prince of India had no difficulty in hiring all the help he required.

Of the thirty persons who constituted the train ten were armed horsemen, whose appearance was such that, if it were answered by a commensurate performance, the Prince might at his leisure march irrespective of the caravan. Nor was he unmindful in the selection of stores for the journey. Long before the sharp bargainers with whom he dealt were through with him, he had won their best opinion, not less by his liberality than for his sound judgment. They ceased speaking of him sneeringly as the *miyan*.**[1]**

Soon as the bargain was bound, the stranger's attendants set about the furnishment of the master's tent. Outside they painted it green. The interior they divided into two equal compartments; one for reception, the other for a *maglis* or drawing–room; and besides giving the latter divans and carpets, they draped the ceiling in the most tasteful manner with the shawls which on the ship had served for awning.

At length, everything in the catalogue of preparation having been attended to, it remained only to wait the day of general departure; and for that, as became his greatness, the Prince kept his own quarters, paying no

attention to what went on around him. He appeared a man who loved solitude, and was averse to thinking in public.

CHAPTER III

THE YELLOW AIR[2]

One evening the reputed Indian sat by the door of his tent alone. The red afterglow of the day hung in the western sky. Overhead the stars were venturing timidly out. The camels were at rest, some chewing their cuds, others asleep, their necks stretched full length upon the warm earth. The watchmen in a group talked in low voices. Presently the cry of a muezzin, calling to prayer, flew in long, quavering, swelling notes through the hushed air. Others took up the call, clearer or fainter according to the distance; and so was it attuned to the feeling invoked by the conditions of the moment that no effort was required of a listener to think it a refrain from the sky. The watchmen ceased debating, drew a little apart from each other, spread their *abbas* on the ground, and stepping upon them barefooted, their faces turned to where Mecca lay, began the old unchangeable prayer of Islam—*God is God, and Mahomet is His Prophet*.

The pilgrim at the tent door arose, and when his rude employes were absorbed in their devotions, like them, he too prayed, but very differently.

"God of Israel—my God!" he said, in a tone hardly more than speaking to himself. "These about me, my fellow creatures, pray thee in the hope of life, I pray thee in the hope of death. I have come up from the sea, and the end was not there; now I will go into the Desert in search of it. Or if I must live, Lord, give me the happiness there is in serving thee. Thou hast need of instruments of good; let me henceforth be one of them, that by working for thy honor, I may at last enjoy the peace of the blessed—Amen."

Timing his movements with those of the watchmen, he sank to his knees, and repeated the prayer; when they fell forward, their faces to the earth in the *rik'raths* so essential by the Mohammedan code, he did the same. When they were through the service, he went on with it that they might see him. A careful adherence to this conduct gained him in a short time great

repute for sanctity, making the pilgrimage enjoyable as well as possible to him.

The evening afterglow faded out, giving the world to night and the quiet it affects; still the melancholy Indian walked before his tent, his hands clasped behind him, his chin in the beard on his breast. Let us presume to follow his reflections.

"Fifty years! A lifetime to all but me. Lord, how heavy is thy hand when thou art in anger!"

He drew a long breath, and groaned.

"Fifty years! That they are gone, let those mourn to whom time is measured in scanty dole."

He became retrospective.

"The going to Cipango was like leaving the world. War had yielded to contentions about religion. I wearied of them also. My curse is to weary of everything. I wonder if the happiness found in the affection of women is more lasting?"

He pursued the thought awhile, finishing with a resolution.

"If the opportunity comes my way, I will try it. I remember yet the mother of my Lael, though I did not understand the measure of the happiness she brought me until she died."

He returned then to the first subject.

"When will men learn that faith is a natural impulse, and pure religion but faith refined of doubt?"

The question was succeeded by a wordless lapse in his mind, the better apparently to prolong the pleasure he found in the idea.

"God help me," he presently resumed, "to bring about an agreement in that definition of religion! There can be no reform or refinement of faith except God be its exclusive subject; and so certainly it leads to lopping off all parasitical worships such as are given to Christ and Mahomet… Fifty years ago the sects would have tortured me had I mentioned God as a principle broad and holy enough for them to stand upon in compromise of their disputes; they may not be better disposed now, yet I will try them. If I

succeed I will not be a vulgar monument builder like Alexander; neither will I divide a doubtful fame with Caesar. My glory will be unique. I will have restored mankind to their true relations with God. I will be their Arbiter in Religion. Then surely"—he lifted his face appealingly as to a person enthroned amidst the stars—"surely thou wilt release me from this too long life… If I fail"—he clinched his hands—"if I fail, they may exile me, they may imprison me, they may stretch me on the rack, but they cannot kill me."

Then he walked rapidly, his head down, like a man driven. When he stopped it was to say to himself uncertainly:

"I feel weak at heart. Misgivings beset me. Lord, Lord, how long am I to go on thus cheating myself? If thou wilt not pardon me, how can I hope honor from my fellow men? Why should I struggle to serve them?"

Again he clinched his hands.

"Oh, the fools, the fools! Will they never be done? When I went away they were debating, Was Mahomet a Prophet? Was Christ the Messiah? And they are debating yet. What miseries I have seen come of the dispute!"

From this to the end, the monologue was an incoherent discursive medley, now plaintive, now passionate, at times prayerful, then exultant. As he proceeded, he seemed to lose sight of his present aim at doing good in the hope of release from termless life, and become the Jew he was born.

"The orators called in the sword, and they plied each other with it through two hundred years and more. There were highways across Europe blazoned with corpses… But they were great days. I remember them. remember Manuel's appeal to Gregory. I was present at the Council of Clermont. I heard Urban's speech. I saw Walter, the beggar of Burgundy, a fugitive in Constantinople; but his followers, those who went out with him—where were they? I saw Peter, the eremite and coward, dragged back, a deserter, to the plague–smitten camps of Antioch. I helped vote Godfrey King of Jerusalem, and carried a candle at his coronation. I saw the hosts of Louis VII and Conrad, a million and more, swallowed up in Iconia and the Pisidian mountains. Then, that the persecutors of my race might not

have rest, I marched with Saladin to the re–conquest of the Holy City, and heard Philip and Richard answer his challenge. The brave Kurd, pitying the sorrows of men, at last agreed to tolerate Christians in Jerusalem as pilgrims; and there the strife might have ended, but I played upon the ambition of Baldwin, and set Europe in motion again. No fault of mine that the knight stopped at Constantinople as King of the East. Then the second Frederick presumed to make a Christian city of Jerusalem. I resorted to the Turks, and they burned and pillaged it, and captured St. Louis, the purest and best of the crusaders. He died in my arms. Never before had I a tear for man or woman of his faith! Then came Edward I., and with him the struggle as a contest of armies terminated. By decision of the sword, Mahomet *was* the Prophet of God, and Christ but the carpenter's son… By permission of the Kaliphs, the Christians might visit Jerusalem as pilgrims. A palmer's staff in place of a sword! For shield, a beggar's scrip! But the bishops accepted, and then ushered in an age of fraud, Christian against Christian… The knoll on which the Byzantine built his church of the Holy Sepulchre is not the Calvary. That the cowled liars call the Sepulchre never held the body of Christ. The tears of the millions of penitents have but watered a monkish deceit… Fools and blasphemers! The Via Dolorosa led out of the Damascus gate on the north. The skull–shaped hill beyond that gate is the Golgotha. Who should know it better than I? The Centurion asked for a guide; I walked with him. Hyssop was the only green thing growing upon the mount; nothing but hyssop has grown there since. At the base on the west was a garden, and the Sepulchre was in the garden. From the foot of the cross I looked toward the city, and there was a sea of men extending down to the gate… I know!—I know!—I and misery know!… When I went out fifty years ago there was an agreement between the ancient combatants; each vied with the other in hating and persecuting the Jew, and there was no limit to the afflictions he endured from them… Speak thou, O Hebron, city of the patriarchs! By him who sits afar, and by him near unto thee, by the stars this peaceful night, and by the Everlasting who is above the stars, be thou heard a witness testifying! There was a day when thou didst stand open to the children of Israel; for the cave and the dead within it belonged to them.

Then Herod built over it, and shut it up, though without excluding the tribes. The Christian followed Herod; yet the Hebrew might pay his way in. After the Christian, the Moslem; and now nor David the King, nor son of his, though they alighted at the doors from chariots, and beat upon them with their crowns and sceptres, could pass in and live… Kings have come and gone, and generations, and there is a new map from which old names have been dropped. As respects religion, alas! the divisions remain—here a Mohammedan, there a Christian, yonder a Judean… From my door I study these men, the children of those in life at my going into exile. Their ardor is not diminished. To kiss a stone in which tradition has planted a saying of God, they will defy the terrors of the Desert, heat, thirst, famine, disease, death. I bring them an old idea in a new relation—God, giver of life and power to Son and Prophet—God, alone entitled to worship—God, a principle of Supreme Holiness to which believers can bring their creeds and doctrines for mergence in a treaty of universal brotherhood. Will they accept it?… Yesterday I saw a Schiah and a Sunite meet, and the old hate darkened their faces as they looked at each other. Between them there is only a feud of Islamites; how much greater is their feud with Christians? How immeasurably greater the feud between Christian and Jew?… My heart misgives me! Lord! Can it be I am but cherishing a dream?"

At sight of a man approaching through the dusk, he calmed himself.

"Peace to thee, Hadji," said the visitor, halting.

"Is it thou, Shaykh?"

"It is I, my father's son. I have a report to make."

"I was thinking of certain holy things of priceless worth, sayings of the Prophet. Tell me what thou hast?"

The Shaykh saluted him, and returned, "The caravan will depart to–morrow at sunrise."

"Be it so. We are ready. I will designate our place in the movement. Thou art dismissed."

"O Prince! I have more to report."

"More?"

"A vessel came in to–day from Hormuz on the eastern shore, bringing a horde of beggars."

"Bismillah! It was well I hired of thee a herd of camels, and loaded them with food. I shall pay my fine to the poor early."

The Shaykh shook his head.

"That they are beggars is nothing," he said. "Allah is good to all his creatures. The jackals are his, and must be fed. For this perhaps the unfortunates were blown here by the angel that rides the yellow air. Four corpses were landed, and their clothes sold in the camp."

"Thou wouldst say," the Prince rejoined, "that the plague will go with us to the Kaaba. Content thee, Shaykh. Allah will have his way."

"But my men are afraid."

"I will place a drop of sweetened water on their lips, and bring them safe through, though they are dying. Tell them as much."

The Shaykh was departing when the Prince, shrewdly suspecting it was he who feared, called him back.

"How call ye the afternoon prayer, O Shaykh?"

"El Asr."

"What didst thou when it was called?"

"Am I not a believer? I prayed."

"And thou hast heard the Arafat sermon?"

"Even so, O Prince."

"Then, as thou art a believer, and a hadji, O Shaykh, thou and all with thee shalt see the Khatib on his dromedary, and hear him again. Only promise me to stay till his last *Amin*."

"I promise," said the Shaykh, solemnly.

"Go—but remember prayer is the bread of faith."

The Shaykh was comforted, and withdrew.

With the rising of the sun next day the caravan, numbering about three thousand souls, defiled confusedly out of the town. The Prince, who might

have been first, of choice fell in behind the rest.

"Why dost thou take this place, O Prince?" asked the Shaykh, who was proud of his company, and their comparative good order.

He received for answer, "The blessings of Allah are with the dying whom the well–to–do and selfish in front have passed unnoticed."

The Shaykh repeated the saying to his men, and they replied: "Ebn–Hanife was a Dervish: so is this Prince—exalted be his name!"

Eulogy could go no further.

CHAPTER IV

EL ZARIBAH

"I will be their Arbiter in Religion," said the Indian Mystic in his monologue.

This is to be accepted as the motive of the scheme the singular man was pursuing in the wastes of Arabia.

It must be taken of course with his other declaration—"There can be no reform or refinement of faith except God be its exclusive subject; and so certainly it leads to lopping off all parasitical worships such as are given to Christ and Mahomet."

Fifty years prior, disgusted with the endless and inconsequential debates and wars between Islam and Christianity, he had betaken himself to Cipango,**[3]** wherever that might be. There, in a repentant hour, he had conceived the idea of a Universal Religious Brotherhood, with God for its accordant principle; and he was now returned to present and urge the compromise. In more distinct statement, he was making the pilgrimage to ascertain from personal observation if the Mohammedan portion of the world was in a consenting mood. It was not his first visit to Mecca; but the purpose in mind gave the journey a new zest; and, as can be imagined, nothing in the least indicative of the prevalent spirit of the Hajj escaped him. Readers following the narrative should keep this explanation before them.

From El Derayah the noble pilgrim had taken the longer route by way of Medina, where he scrupulously performed the observances decreed for the faithful at the Mosque of the Prophet. Thence he descended with the caravan from Damascus.

Dawn of the sixth of September broke over the rolling plain known as the Valley of El Zaribah, disclosing four tents pitched on an eminence to the right of a road running thence south–west. These tents, connected by

ropes, helped perfect an enclosure occupied by horses, donkeys, camels and dromedaries, and their cumbrous equipments. Several armed men kept watch over the camp.

The Valley out to the pink granite hills rimming it round wore a fresh green tint in charming contrast with the tawny–black complexion of the region through which the day's journey had stretched. Water at a shallow depth nourished camel grass in patches, and Theban palms, the latter much scattered and too small to be termed trees. The water, and the nearness of the Holy City—only one day distant—had, in a time long gone, won for El Zaribah its double appointment of meeting place for the caravans and place of the final ceremony of assumption of the costume and vows *El Ihram.*

The Prophet himself had prescribed the ceremony; so the pilgrims in the camp on the eminence, the better to observe it and at the same time get a needful rest, had come up during the night in advance of the caravans. In other words, the Prince of India—the title by which he was now generally known—might, at the opening hour of the day, have been found asleep in the larger of the four tents; the one with the minaret in miniature so handsomely gilded and of such happy effect over the centre pole.

Along the roadsides and on the high grounds of the Valley other tints were visible, while faint columns of smoke arising out of the hollows told of preparations for breakfast. These signified the presence of hucksters, barbers, costume dealers, and traders generally, who, in anticipation of the arrival of the caravans, had come from the city to exercise their callings. Amongst them, worthy of special attention, was a multitude of professional guides,**[4]** ready for a trifling hire to take charge of uninitiated pilgrims, and lead them regardfully through the numerous ceremonies to which they were going.

Shortly after noon the Prince called in a guide, and several barbers, men with long gowns, green turbans, brass basins, sharp knives, and bright bladed scissors. The assumption of the real pilgrimage by his people was then begun. Each man submitted his head, mustaches, and nails to the experts, and bathed and perfumed himself, and was dusted with musk.

Next the whole party put off their old garments, and attired themselves in the two white vestments *El Ihram*.**[5]** The change of apparel was for the better. Finally the votaries put on sandals peculiar in that nothing pertaining to them might cover the instep; then they stood up in a row faced toward Mecca, and repeated the ancient formula of dedication of the *Ihram* to the Almighty slowly intoned for them by the guide.

The solemn demeanor of the men during the ceremony, which was tedious and interspersed with prayers and curious recitals, deeply impressed the Prince, who at the end of the scene retired into his tent, with his three mute attendants, and there performed the vows for himself and them. There also they all assumed the indispensable costume. Then, as he well might do, the law permitting him to seek the shade of a house or a tent, he had a rug spread before his door, where, in the fresh white attire, he seated himself, and with a jar of expressed juice of pomegranates at his side made ready to witness the passing of the caravans, the dust of which was reported visible in the east.

Afterwhile the cloud of dust momentarily deepening over in that direction was enlivened by a clash of cymbals and drums, blent with peals of horns, the fine, high music yet cherished by warriors of the Orient. Presently a body of horsemen appeared, their spear points glistening in the sunlight. A glance at them, then his gaze fixed upon a chief in leading.

The sun had been hot all day; the profiles of the low hills were dim with tremulous haze lying scorchingly upon them; the furred hulks of the camels in the enclosure looked as if they were smoking; the sky held nothing living except two kites which sailed the upper air slowly, their broad wings at widest extension; yet the chief persisted in wearing his arms and armor, like the soldiers behind him. Ere long he rode up and halted in front of the Prince, and near by.

His head was covered with a visorless casque, slightly conical, from the edge of which, beginning about the temples, a cape of fine steel rings, buckled under the chin, enveloped the neck and throat, and fell loosely over the neck and shoulders, and part way down the back. A shirt of linked mail, pliable as wool, defended the body and the arms to the elbows;

overalls of like material, save that the parts next the saddle were leather, clothed the thighs and legs. As the casque and every other link of the mail were plated with gold, the general effect at a distance was as if the whole suit were gold. A surcoat of light green cloth hung at the back half hiding a small round shield of burnished brass; at the left side there was a cimeter, and in the right hand a lance. The saddle was of the high–seated style yet affected by horsemen of Circassia; at the pommel a bow and well–filled quiver were suspended, and as the stirrups were in fact steel slippers the feet were amply protected by them.

At sight of the martial figure, the Indian, in admiration, arose to a sitting posture. Such, he thought, were the warriors who followed Saladin! And when the stranger, reaching the summit of the eminence, turned out of the road coming apparently to the door of the tent, he involuntarily sprang to his feet ready to do him honor.

The face, then plainly seen, though strong of feature, and thoroughly bronzed, was that of a young man not more than twenty–two or three, dark–eyed, mustached and bearded, and of a serious though pleasant expression. He kept his seat with ease and grace; if he and the broad–chested dark–bay horse were not really one, they were one in spirit; together they wrought the impression which was the origin of *majesty*, a title for kings.

While the Prince was turning this in his mind, the soldier pulled rein, and stopped long enough to glance at him and at the camp; then, turning the horse, he looked the other way, making it apparent he had taken position on the rise to overlook the plain, and observe the coming and dispersion of the caravans.

Another mounted man ascended the hill, armed and armored like the first one, though not so richly, and bearing a standard of dulled yellow silk hanging from a gilded staff. The ground of the standard was filled with inscriptions in red lettering, leaving the golden crescent and star on the point of the staff to speak of nationality. The bearer of the flag dismounted, and at a sign planted it in the ground.

Seeing his Shaykh, the Prince called him:

"Who is the warrior yonder?—He in the golden armor?"

"The Emir El Hajj,[6] O Prince."

"He the Emir El Hajj!—And so young?—Oh! a hero of the Serail. The Kislar Aga extolled him one day."

"Thy remark and common report, O excellent Prince, could not journey together on the same camel," said the Shaykh. "In the Khan at Medina I heard his story. There is a famous enemy of the Turks, Iskander Bey, in strength a Jinn, whose sword two men can scarcely lift. He appeared before the army of the Sultan one day with a challenge. He whom thou seest yonder alone dared go forth to meet him. The fought from morning till noon; then they rested. 'Who art thou?' asked Iskander. 'I am a slave of Amurath, the Commander of the Faithful, who hath commissioned me to take thee to him dead or alive.' Iskander laughed, and said, 'I know by thy tongue now thou art not a Turk; and to see if the Commander of the Faithful, as thou callest him, hath it in soul to make much of thy merit as a warrior, I will leave thee the honors of the combat, and to go thy way.' Whereat they say he lifted his ponderous blade as not heavier than the leaf of a dead palm, and strode from the field."

The Prince listened, and at the end said, like a man in haste:

"Thou knowest Nilo, my black man. Bring him hither."

The Shaykh saluted gravely, and hurried away, leaving his patron with eyes fixed on the Emir, and muttering:

"So young!—and in such favor with the old Amurath! I will know him. If I fail, he may be useful to me. Who knows? Who knows?"

He looked upward as if speaking to some one there.

Meantime the Emir was questioning the ensign.

"This pilgrim," he said, "appears well provided."

And the ensign answered:

"He is the Indian Prince of whom I have been hearing since we left Medina."

"What hast thou heard?"

"That being rich, he is open–handed, making free with his aspers as sowers with their seed."

"What more?"

"He is devout and learned as an Imam. His people call him Malik. Of the prayers he knows everything. As the hours arrive, he lifts the curtains of his litter, and calls them with a voice like Belal's. The students in the mosque would expire of envy could they see him bend his back in the benedictions."

"*Bismillah!*"

"They say also that in the journey from El Katif to Medina he travelled behind the caravan when he might have been first."

"I see not the virtue in that. The hill–men love best to attack the van."

"Tell me, O Emir, which wouldst thou rather face, a hill–man or the Yellow Air?"

"The hill–man," said the other decidedly.

"And thou knowest when those in front abandon a man struck with the disease?"

"Yes."

"And then?"

"The vultures and the jackals have their rights."

"True, O Emir, but listen. The caravan left El Katif three thousand strong. Three hundred and more were struck with the plague, and left to die; of those, over one hundred were brought in by the Indian. They say it was for this he preferred to march in the rear. He himself teaches a saying of the *Hadis*, that Allah leaves his choicest blessings to be gathered from amidst the poor and the dying."

"If he thou describest be not a Prince of India as he claims, he is a"—

"A *Mashaikh*."**[7]**

"Ay, by the Most Merciful! But how did he save the castaways?"

"By a specific known only to kings and lords in his country. Can he but reach the plague–struck before death, a drop on the tongue will work a

cure. Thou heardst what he did at Medina?"

"No."

"The Masjid El Nabawi**[8]** as thou knowest, O Emir, hath many poor who somehow live in its holy shade."

"I know it," said the Emir, with a laugh. "I went in the house rich, and come out of it poorer than the poorest of the many who fell upon me at the doors."

"Well," the ensign continued, not heeding the interruption, "he called them in, and fed them; not with rice, and leeks, and bread ten days sour, but with dishes to rejoice a Kaliph; and they went away swearing the soul of the Prophet was returned to the world."

At this juncture a troop of horsemen ascending the hill brought the conversation to a stop. The uniformity of arms and armor, the furniture of the steeds, the order and regularity of the general movement, identified the body as some favorite corps of the Turkish army; while the music, the bristling lances, the many–folded turbans, and the half–petticoated trousers threw about it a glamor of purest orientalism.

In the midst of the troop, a vanguard in front, a rearguard behind them, central objects of care and reverence, moved the sacred camels, tall, powerful brutes, more gigantic in appearance because of their caparisoning and the extraordinary burdens they bore. They too were in full regalia, their faces visored in silk and gold, their heads resplendent with coronets of drooping feathers, their ample neck cloths heavy with tasselled metallic fringing falling to the knees. Each one was covered with a mantle of brocaded silk arranged upon a crinoline form to give the effect somewhat of the curved expansion on the rim of a bell. On the humps rose pavilions of silk in flowing draperies, on some of which the entire *Fatihah* was superbly embroidered. Over the pavilions arose enormous aigrettes of green and black feathers. Such were the *mahmals*, containing, among other things of splendor and fabulous value, the *Kiswah* which the Sultan was forwarding to the Scherif of Mecca to take the place of the worn curtains then draping the Tabernacle or House of God.

The plumed heads of the camels, and the yet more richly plumed pavilions, exalted high above the horsemen, moved like things afloat. One may not tell what calamities to body and soul would overtake the Emir El Hajj did he fail to deliver the *mahmals* according to consignment.

While the cavalry came up the hill the musicians exerted themselves; at the top, the column turned and formed line left of the Emir, followed by strings of camels loaded with military properties, and a horde of camp–followers known as *farrash*. Presently another camp was reared upon the eminence, its white roofs shining afar over the plain, and in their midst one of unusual dimensions for the Sultan's gifts.

The caravans in the meantime began to emerge from the dun cloud of their own raising, and spread at large over the land; and when the young Emir was most absorbed in the spectacle the Prince's Shaykh approached him.

"O Emir!" the Arab said, after a salaam.

A wild fanfare of clarions, cymbals, and drums drowning his voice, he drew nearer, almost to the stirrup.

"O Emir!" he said again.

This time he was heard.

"What wouldst thou?"

There was the slightest irritation in the tone, and on the countenance of the speaker as he looked down; but the feeling behind it vanished at sight of a negro whose native blackness was intensified by the spotless white of the Ihram in which he was clad. Perhaps the bright platter of beaten copper the black man bore, and the earthen bottle upon it, flanked by two cups, one of silver, the other of crystal, had something to do with the Emir's change of manner and mind.

"What wouldst thou?" he asked, slightly bending towards them.

The Shaykh answered:

"The most excellent Hadji, my patron, whom thou mayst see reclining at the door of his tent, sends thee greeting such as is lawful from one true believer to another travelling for the good of their souls to the most Holy

of Cities; and he prays thou wilt accept from him a draught of this water of pomegranates, which he vouches cooling to the tongue and healthful to the spirit, since he bought it at the door of the House of the Prophet—to whom be prayer and praise forever."

During the speech, the negro, with a not unpractised hand, and conscious doubtless of the persuasion there was in the sound and sparkle of the beverage, especially to one not yet dismounted from a long ride on the desert, filled the cups, and held them up for acceptance.

Stripping the left hand of its steel–backed gauntlet, the Emir lifted the glass, and, with a bow to the pilgrim then arisen and standing by the tent–door, drank it at a draught; whereupon, leaving the ensign to pay like honor to the offered hospitality, he wheeled his horse, and rode to make acknowledgment in person.

"The favor thou hast done me, O Hadji," he said, dismounted, "is in keeping with the acts of mercy to thy fellow–men with which I hear thou hast paved the road from El Katif as with mother–of–pearl."

"Speak not of them, I pray," the Wanderer answered, returning the bow he received. "Who shall refuse obedience to the law?"

"I see plainly thou art a good man," the Emir said, bowing again.

"It would not become me to say so. Turning to something better, this tent in the wilderness is mine, and as the sun is not declined to its evening quarter, perhaps, O gallant Emir, it would be more to thy comfort were we to go within. I, and all I have, are at thy command."

"I am grateful for the offer, most excellent Hadji—if the address be lower than thy true entitlement, thou shouldst bring the Shaykh yonder to account for misleading a stranger—but the sun and I have become unmindful of each other, and duty is always the same in its demands at least. Here, because the valley is the *micath*,**[9]** the caravans are apt to run wild, and need a restraining hand. I plead the circumstance in excuse for presuming to request that thou wilt allow me to amend thy offer of courtesy."

The Emir paused, waiting for the permission.

"So thou dost accept the offer, amend it as thou wilt," and the Prince smiled.

Then the other returned, with evident satisfaction: "When our brethren of the caravans are settled, and the plain is quiet, and I too have taken the required vows, I will return to thee. My quarters are so close to thine it would please me to be allowed to come alone."

"Granted, O Emir, granted—if, on thy side, thou wilt consent to permit me to give thee of the fare I may yet have at disposal. I can promise thou shalt not go away hungry."

"Be it so."

Thereupon the Emir remounted, and went back to his stand overlooking the plain, and the coming of the multitude.

CHAPTER V

THE PASSING OF THE CARAVANS

From his position the Wanderer could see the advancing caravans; but as the spectacle would consume the afternoon, he called his three attendants, and issued directions for the entertainment of the Emir in the evening; this done, he cast himself upon the rug, and gave rein to his curiosity, thinking, not unreasonably, to find in what would pass before him something bearing on the subject ever present in his mind.

The sky could not be called blue of any tint; it seemed rather to be filled with common dust mixed with powder of crushed brick. The effect was of a semi–transparent ceiling flushed with heat from the direct down–beating action of the sun, itself a disk of flame. Low mountains, purplish black in hue, made a horizon on which the ceiling appeared set, like the crystal in the upper valve of a watch. Thus shut in, but still fair to view east and south of the position the spectator occupied, lay El Zaribah, whither, as the appointed meeting place, so many pilgrims had for days and weeks ever wearier growing been "walking with their eyes." In their thought the Valley was not so much a garden or landscape of beauty as an ante–chamber of the House of Allah. As they neared it now, journeying since the break of day, impatience seized them; so when the cry sped down the irregular column—"It is here! It is here!" they answered with a universal *labbayaki*, signifying, "Thou hast called us— here we are, here we are!" Then breaking into a rabble, they rushed multitudinously forward. To give the reader an idea of the pageant advancing to possess itself of the Valley, it will be well to refresh his memory with a few details. He should remember, in the first place, that it was not merely the caravan which left El Katif over on the western shore of the Green Sea, but two great caravans merged into one—*El Shemi*, from Damascus, and *Misri*, from Cairo. To comprehend these, the region they drained of pilgrims should be

next considered. For example, at Cairo there was a concentration from the two Egypts, Upper and Lower, from the mysterious deserts of Africa, and from the cities and countries along the southern shore of the Mediterranean far as Gibraltar; while the whole East, using the term in its most comprehensive sense, emptied contingents of the devout into Damascus. In forwarding the myriads thus poured down upon them the Arabs were common carriers, like the Venetians to the hordes of western Europe in some of the later crusades; so to their thousands of votaries proper, the other thousands of them engaged in the business are also to be computed. El Medina was the great secondary rendezvous. Hardly could he be accounted of the Faithful who in making the pilgrimage would turn his back upon the bones of the Prophet; of such merit was the saying, "One prayer in this thy mosque is of more virtue than a thousand in other places, save only the Masjid El Haram." Once at Medina, how could the pilgrim refuse his presence, if not his tears, at El Kuba, forever sacred to the Mohammedan heart as the first place of public prayer in Islam? Finally, it should not be forgotten that the year we write of belonged to a cycle when readers of the Koran and worshippers at Mecca were more numerous than now, if not more zealous and believing. And it was to witness the passing of this procession, so numerous, so motley, so strangely furnished, so uncontrolled except as it pleased, the Prince of India was seated at the door of his tent upon the hill. Long before the spectacle was sighted in the distance, its approach was announced by an overhanging pillar of cloud, not unlike that which went before the Israelites in their exodus through similar wastes. Shortly after the interview with the Emir, the Prince, looking under the pillar, saw a darkening line appear, not more at first than a thread stretched across a section of the east.

The apparition was without a break; nor might he have said it was in motion or of any depth. A sound came from the direction not unlike that of a sibilant wind. Presently out of the perspective, which reduced the many to one and all sizes to a level, the line developed into unequal divisions, with intervals between them; about the same time the noise became recognizable as the voices fiercely strained and inarticulate of an innumerable host of men. Then the divisions broke into groups, some

larger than others; a little later individuals became discernible; finally what had appeared a line resolved itself into a convulsing mass, without front, without wings, but of a depth immeasurable.

The pilgrims did not attempt to keep the road; having converted their march into a race, they spread right and left over the country, each seeking a near way; sometimes the object was attained, sometimes not; the end was a confusion beyond description. The very inequalities of the ground helped the confusion. A group was one moment visible on a height; then it vanished in a hollow. Now there were thousands on a level; then, as if sinking, they went down, down, and presently where they were there was only dust or a single individual.

Afterwhile, so wide was the inrolling tide, the field of vision overflowed, and the eye was driven to ranging from point to point, object to object. Then it was discernible that the mass was mixed of animals and men—here horses, there camels—some with riders, some without—all, the burdened as well as unburdened, straining forward under urgency of shriek and stick—forward for life—forward as if of the two "comforts," Success beckoned them in front, and Despair behind plied them with spears.**[10]**

At length the eastern boundary of the Valley was reached. There one would suppose the foremost of the racers, the happy victors, would rest or, at their leisure, take of the many sites those they preferred; but no—the penalty attaching to the triumph was the danger of being run down by the thousands behind. In going on there was safety—and on they went.

To this time the spectacle had been a kind of panoramic generality; now the details came to view, and accustomed as he was to marvels of pageantry, the Prince exclaimed: "These are not men, but devils fleeing from the wrath of God!" and involuntarily he went nearer, down to the brink of the height. It seemed the land was being inundated with camels; not the patient brutes we are used to thinking of by that name, with which domestication means ill–treatment and suffering—the slow–going burden–bearers, always appealing to our sympathy because always apparently tired, hungry, sleepy, worn–out—always reeling on as if looking for quiet places in which to slip their loads of whatever kind, and lie down and die;

but the camel aroused, enraged, frightened, panic–struck, rebellious, sending forth strange cries, and running with all its might—an army of camels hurling their gigantic hulks along at a rate little less than blind impetus. And they went, singly, and in strings, and yonder a mass. The slower, and those turned to the right or left of the direct course, and all such as had hesitated upon coming to a descent, were speedily distanced or lost to sight; so the ensemble was constantly shifting. And then the rolling and tossing of the cargoes and packages on the backs of the animals, and the streaming out of curtains, scarfs, shawls, and loose draperies of every shape and color, lent touches of drollery and bright contrasts to the scene. One instant the spectator on the hill was disposed to laugh, then to admire, then to shiver at the immensity of a danger; over and over again amidst his quick variation of feeling, he repeated the exclamation: "These are not men, but devils fleeing from the wrath of God!"

Such was the spectacle in what may be called the second act; presently it reached a third; and then the fury of the movement, so inconsistent with the habits and patient nature of the camel, was explained. In the midst of the hurly–burly, governing and directing it, were horsemen, an army of themselves. Some rode in front, and the leading straps on which they pulled with the combined strength of man and horse identified them as drivers; others rode as assistants of the drivers, and they were armed with goads which they used skilfully and without mercy. There were many collisions, upsets, and entanglements; yet the danger did not deter the riders from sharing the excitement, and helping it forward to their utmost. They too used knotted ropes, and stabbed with sharpened sticks; they also contributed to the unearthly tumult of sounds which travelled with the mob, a compound of prayers, imprecations, and senseless screams—the medley that may be occasionally heard from a modern mad–house.

In the height of the rush the Shaykh came up.

"How long," said the Prince—"in the Prophet's name, how long will this endure?"

"Till night, O most excellent Hadji—if the caravans be so long in coming."

"Is it usual?"

"It has been so from the beginning."

Thereupon the curiosity of the Prince took another turn. A band of horsemen galloped into view—free riders, with long lances carried upright, their caftans flying, and altogether noble looking.

"These are Arabs. I know by their horses and their bearing," said he, with admiration; "but possibly thou canst give me the name of their tribe."

The Shaykh answered with pride: "Their horses are gray, and by the sign, O lover of the Prophet, they are the Beni–Yarb. Every other one of them is a poet; in the face of an enemy, they are all warriors."

The camps on the hill, with the yellow flag giving notice of the Emir's station, had effect upon others besides the Yarbis; all who wished to draw out of the *melange* turned towards them, bringing the spectacle in part to the very feet of the Wanderer; whereas he thought with a quicker beating of the heart, "The followers of the Prophet are coming to show me of what they are this day composed." Then he said to the Shaykh, "Stand thou here, and tell me as I shall ask."

The conversation between them may be thus summarized:

The current which poured past then, its details in perfect view, carried along with it all the conditions and nationalities of the pilgrimage. Natives of the desert on bare–backed camels, clinging to the humps with one hand, while they pounded with the other—natives on beautiful horses, not needing whip or spur—natives on dromedaries so swift, sure–footed, and strong there was no occasion for fear. Men, and often women and children, on ragged saddle–cloths, others in pretentious boxes, and now and then a person whose wealth and rank were published by the magnificence of the litter in which he was borne, swinging luxuriously between long–stepping dromedaries from El Sbark.

"By Allah!" the Prince exclaimed. "Here hath barbarism its limit! Behold!"

They of whom he spoke came up in irregular array mounted on dromedaries without housing. At their head rode one with a white lettered

green flag, and beating an immense drum. They were armed with long spears of Indian bamboo, garnished below the slender points with swinging tufts of ostrich feathers. Each carried a woman behind him disdainful of a veil. The feminine screams of exultation rose high above the yells of the men, helping not a little to the recklessness with which the latter bore onward.

Woe to such in their way as were poorly mounted. In a twinkling they were ridden down. Nor did those fare better who were overtaken struggling with a string of camels. The crash of bursting boxes, the sharp report of rending ropes, the warning cry, the maddening cheer; a battle of men, another of beasts—and when the collision had passed, the earth was strewn with its wreck.

"They are Wahabbas, O Hadji," said the Shaykh. "Thou seest the tufts on their spears. Under them they carry *Jehannum*."

"And these now coming?" asked the Prince. "Their long white hats remind me of Persia."

"Persians they are," replied the Shaykh, his lip curling, his eyes gleaming. "They will tear their clothes, and cut their shaven crowns, and wail, 'Woe's me, O Ali!' then kiss the Kaaba with defilement on their beards. The curse of the *Shaykaim* is on them—may it stay there!"

Then the Prince knew it was a Sunite speaking of Schiahs.

Yet others of the Cafila of Bagdad passed with the despised sons of Iran; notably Deccanese, Hindoos, Afghans, and people from the Himalayas, and beyond them far as Kathay, and China, and Siam, all better known to the Prince than to his Shaykh, who spoke of them, saying, "Thou shouldst know thine own, O Hadji! Thou art their father!"

Next, in a blending that permitted no choice of associates, along swept the chief constituents of the caravans—Moors and Blackamoors, Egyptians, Syrians, Turks, Kurds, Caucasians, and Arabs of every tribe, each a multitude of themselves, and their passing filled up the afternoon.

Towards sundown the hurry and rush of the movement perceptibly slackened. Over in the west there were signs of a halt; tents were rising,

and the smoke of multiplying fires began to deepen the blue of the distance. It actually appeared as if settlement for the night would creep back upon the east, whence the irruption had burst.

At a moment when the Prince's interest in the scene was commencing to flag, and he was thinking of returning to his tent, the rearmost divisions of the pilgrims entered the Valley. They were composed of footmen and donkey–riders, for whom the speed of the advance bodies had been too great. High–capped Persians, and Turks whose turbans were reduced to faded fezes, marched in the van, followed closely by a rabble of Takruris, ragged, moneyless, living upon meat of abandoned animals. Last of all were the sick and dying, who yet persisted in dragging their fainting limbs along as best they could. Might they but reach the Holy City! Then if they died it would be as martyrs for whom the doors of Paradise are always open. With them, expectants of easy prey, like the *rakham* **[11]** sailing in slow circles overhead, flocked the beggars, thieves, outcasts and assassins; but night came quickly, and covered them, and all the things they did, for evil and night have been partners from the beginning.

At last the Prince returned to his tent. He had seen the sun set over El Zaribah; he had seen the passing of the caravans. Out there in the Valley they lay. They—to him, and for his purposes, the Mohammedan world unchanged—the same in composition, in practice, in creed—only he felt now a consciousness of understanding them as never before. Mahomet, in his re–introduction of God to man, had imposed himself upon their faith, its master idea, its central figure, the superior in sanctity, the essential condition—the ONE! Knowingly or unknowingly, he left a standard of religious excellence behind him—Himself. And by that standard the thief in the wake of the mighty caravans robbing the dead, the Thug strangling a victim because he was too slow in dying, were worthy Paradise, and would attain it, for they believed in him. Faith in the Prophet of God was more essential than faith in God. Such was the inspiration of Islam. A sinking of spirit fell upon the unhappy man. He felt a twinge of the bitterness always waiting on failure, where the undertaking, whatever it be, has enlisted the whole heart. At such times instinctively we turn here and there for help, and in its absence, for comfort and consolation; what should he do now but

advert to Christianity? What would Christians say of his idea? Was God lost in Christ as he was here in Mahomet?

CHAPTER VI

THE PRINCE AND THE EMIR

In the reception room of the Prince's tent the lamps are lighted; one fastened to the stout centre pole, and five others on as many palings planted in the ground, all burning brightly. The illumination is enriched by the admirable blending of colors in the canopy of shawls. Within the space defined by the five lamps, on a tufted rug, the Mystic and the Emir are seated, both in *Ihram*, and looking cool and comfortable, though the night outside still testifies to the heat of the day.

A wooden trencher, scoured white as ivory, separates the friends, leaving them face to face. In supping they have reached what we call the dessert.

On the trencher are slender baskets containing grapes, figs, and dates, the choicest of the gardens of Medina. A jar of honey, an assortment of dry biscuits, and two jugs, one of water, the other of juice of pomegranates, with drinking cups, complete the board.

At this age, Orientals lingering at table have the cheer of coffee and tobacco; unhappily for the two of whom we are writing, neither of the great narcotics was discovered. Nevertheless it should not be supposed the fruits, the honey, and the waters failed to content them. Behind the host is the negro we already know as Nilo. He is very watchful of his master's every motion.

As guest and host appear now the formalism of acquaintanceship just made has somewhat disappeared, and they are talking easily and with freedom. Occasionally a movement of one or the other brings his head to a favorable angle, whereat the light, dropping on the freshly shaven crown, is sharply glinted back.

The Emir has been speaking of the plague.

"At Medina I was told it had run its course," the host remarked.

"True, O Hadji, but it has returned, and with greater violence. The stragglers were its victims; now it attacks indiscriminately. Yesterday the guard I keep in the rear came to a pilgrim of rank. His litter was deserted, and he was lying in it dead."

"The man may have been murdered."

"Nay," said the Emir, "gold in large amount was found on his person."

"But he had other property doubtless?"

"Of great value."

"What disposition was made of it?"

"It was brought to me, and is now with other stores in my tent; a law of ancient institution vesting it in the Emir El Hajj."

The countenance of the Jew became serious.

"The ownership was not in my thought," he said, waving his hand. "I knew the law; but this scourge of Allah has its laws also, and by one of them we are enjoined to burn or bury whatever is found with the body."

The Emir, seeing the kindly concern of his host, smiled as he answered:

"But there is a higher law, O Hadji."

"I spoke without thinking danger of any kind could disturb thee."

The host drew forward the date basket, and the Emir, fancying he discerned something on his mind besides the fruit, waited his further speech.

"I am reminded of another matter, O brave Emir; but as it also is personal I hesitate. Indeed I will not speak of it except with permission."

"As you will," the other replied, "I will answer—May the Prophet help me!"

"Blessed be the Prophet!" said the Prince, reverently. "Thy confidence doeth me honor, and I thank thee; at the same time I would not presume upon it if thy tongue were less suggestive of a land whose name is music—Italy. It is in my knowledge, O Emir, that the Sultan, thy master—may Allah keep him in countenance!—hath in his service many excellent soldiers by birth of other countries than his own, broad as it is—

Christians, who are none the less of the true faith. Wherefore, wilt thou tell me of thyself?"

The question did not embarrass the Emir.

"The answer must be brief," he answered, without hesitation, "because there is little to tell. I do not know my native country. The peculiarity of accent you have mentioned has been observed by others; and as they agreed with you in assigning it to Italy, I am nothing loath to account myself an Italian. The few shreds of circumstance which came to me in course of time confirmed the opinion, and I availed myself of a favorable opportunity to acquire the tongue. In our further speech, O Hadji, you may prefer its use."

"At thy pleasure," the host replied; "though there is no danger of our being overheard. Nilo, the slave behind me, has been a mute from birth."

Then, without the slightest interruption, the Emir changed his speech from Greek to Italian.

"My earliest remembrance is of being borne in a woman's arms out of doors, under a blue sky, along a margin of white sand, an orchard on one hand, the sea on the other. The report of the waves breaking upon the shore lives distinctly in my memory; so does the color of the trees in the orchard which has since become familiar to me as the green of olives. Equally clear is the recollection that, returning in–doors, I was carried into a house of stone so large it must have been a castle. I speak of it, as of the orchard, and the sea, and the roar of the breakers, quite as much by reference to what I have subsequently seen as from trust in my memory."

Here the host interrupted him to remark:

"Though an Eastern, I have been a traveller in the west, and the description reminds me of the eastern shore of Italy in the region of Brindisi."

"My next recollection," the Emir resumed, "is a child's fright, occasioned by furious flames, and thick smoke, and noises familiar now as of battle. There was then a voyage on the sea during which I saw none but bearded men. The period of perfect knowledge so far as my history is

concerned began when I found myself an object of the love and care of the wife of a renowned Pacha, governor of the city of Brousa. She called me *Mirza*. My childhood was spent in a harem, and I passed from it into a school to enter upon my training as a soldier. In good time I became a Janissary. An opportunity presented itself one day, and I distinguished myself. My master, the Sultan, rewarded me by promotion and transfer to the *Silihdars*,**[12]** the most ancient and favored corps of the Imperial army, it being the body–guard of the Padisha, and garrison of his palace. The yellow flag my ensign carries belongs to that corps. As a further token of his confidence, the Sultan appointed me Emir El Hajj. In these few words, O Hadji, you have my history."

The listener was impressed with the simplicity of the narrative, and the speaker's freedom from regret, sorrow, or passion of any kind.

"It is a sad story, O Emir," he said, sympathetically, "and I cannot think it ended. Knowest thou not more?"

"Nothing of incident," was the reply. "All that remains is inferential. The castle was attacked at night by Turks landed from their galleys."

"And thy father and mother?"

"I never knew them."

"There is another inference," said the Prince, suggestively—"they were Christians."

"Yes, but unbelievers."

The suppression of natural affection betrayed by the remark still more astonished the host.

"But they believed in God," he said.

"They should have believed Mahomet was his Prophet."

"I fear I am giving you pain, O Emir."

"Dismiss the fear, O Hadji."

Again the Jew sought the choicest date in the basket. The indifference of his guest was quick fuel to the misgivings which we have already noticed as taking form about his purpose, and sapping and weakening it. To be

arbiter in the religious disputes of men, the unique consummation called for by his scheme, the disputants must concede him room and hearing. Were all Mohammedans, from whom he hoped most, like this one born of Christians, then the two conditions would be sternly refused him. By the testimony of this witness, there was nothing in the heredity of faith; and it went to his soul incisively that, in stimulating the passions which made the crusades a recurrence of the centuries, he himself had contributed to the defeat now threatening his latest ambition. The sting went to his soul; yet, by force of will, always at command in the presence of strangers, he repressed his feeling, and said:

"Everything is as Allah wills. Let us rejoice that he is our keeper. The determination of our fate, in the sense of what shall happen to us, and what we shall be, and when and where the end shall overtake us, is no more to him than deciding the tint of the rose before the bud is formed. O Emir, I congratulate you on the resignation with which you accept his judgment. I congratulate you upon the age in which he has cast your life. He who in a moment of uncertainty would inform himself of his future should not heed his intentions and hopes; by studying his present conditions, he will find himself an oracle unto himself. He should address his best mind to the question, 'I am now in a road; if I keep it, where will I arrive?' And wisdom will answer, 'What are thy desires? For what art thou fitted? What are the opportunities of the time?' Most fortunate, O Emir, if there be correspondence between the desire, the fitness, and the opportunity!"

The Emir did not comprehend, and seeing it, the host added with a directness approaching the abrupt:

"And now to make the reason of my congratulations clear, it is necessary that thou consent to my putting a seal upon your lips. What sayest thou?"

"If I engage my silence, O Hadji, it is because I believe you are a good man."

The dignity of the Emir's answer did not entirely hide the effect of the Prince's manner.

"Know thou then," the latter continued, with a steady, penetrating gaze —"know thou then, there is a Brahman of my acquaintance who is a

Magus. I use the word to distinguish him from the necromancers whom the Koran has set in everlasting prohibition. He keeps school in a chapel hid away in the heart of jungles overgrowing a bank of the Bermapootra, not far from the mountain gates of the river. He has many scholars, and his intelligence has compassed all knowledge. He is familiar with the supernatural as with the natural. On my way, I visited him… Know thou next, O Emir, I too have had occasion to make inquiries of the future. The vulgar would call me an astrologer—not a professional practising for profit, but an adept seeking information because it lifts me so much nearer Allah and his sublimest mysteries. Very lately I found a celestial horoscope announcing a change in the status of the world. The masterful waves, as you may know, have for many ages flowed from the West; but now, the old Roman impetus having at last spent itself, a refluence is to set in, and the East in its turn pour a dominating flood upon the West. The determining stars have slipped their influences. They are in motion. *Constantinople is doomed!*"

The guest drew a quick breath. Understanding was flooding him with light.

"And now, O Emir, say, if the revelation had stopped there—stopped, I mean, with the overthrow of the Christian capital—wouldst thou have been satisfied with it?"

"No, by Allah, no!"

"Further, Emir. The stars being communicable yet, what wouldst thou have asked them next?"

"I would not have rested until I had from them the name of him who is to be leader in the movement."

The Mystic smiled at the young man's fervor.

"Thou hast saved me telling what I did, and affirmed the logic of our human nature," he said. "Thy imperial master is old, and much worn by wars and cares of government, is he not?"

"Old in greatness," answered the Emir, diplomatically.

"Hath he not a son?"

"A son with all the royal qualities of the father."

"But young—not more than eighteen."

"Not more."

"And the Prophet hath lent him his name?"

"Even so."

The host released the eager face of the Emir from his gaze, while he sought a date in the basket.

"Another horoscope—the second"—he then said, quietly, "revealed everything but the hero's name. He is to be of kingly birth, and a Turk. Though a lad, he is already used to arms and armor."

"Oh! by Allah, Hadji," cried the guest, his face flushed, his words quick, his voice mandatory. "Release me from my pledge of silence. Tell me who thou art, that I may report thee, and the things thou sayest. There was never such news to warm a heroic heart."

The Prince pursued his explanation without apparently noticing the interruption noticing the interruption.

"To verify the confidences of the stars, I sought the Magus in his chapel by the sacred river. Together we consulted them, and made the calculations. He embraced me; but it was agreed between us that absolute verity of the finding could only be had by re–casting the horoscopes at Constantinople. Thou must know, O Emir, there is an astral alphabet which has its origin in the inter–relations of the heavenly bodies, represented by lines impalpable to the common eye; know also that the most favored adept cannot read the mystic letters with the assurance best comporting with verity, except he be at the place of the destined event or revolution. To possess myself of the advantage, I shall ere long visit the ancient capital. More plainly, I am on the way thither now."

Instead of allaying the eagerness of the Emir, the words excited it the more.

"Release me from my pledge," he repeated, entreatingly, "and tell me who thou art. Mahommed is my pupil; he rides, carries shield, lays lance, draws arrow, and strikes with sword and axe as I have taught him. Thou

canst not name a quality characteristic of heroes he does not possess. Doth Allah permit me safe return from the Hajj, he will be first to meet me at his father's gate. Think what happiness I should have in saluting him there with the title—Hail Mahommed, Conqueror of Constantinople!"

The Jew answered:

"I would gladly help thee, O Emir, to happiness and promotion; for I see what afterwhile, if not presently, they would follow such a salutation of thy pupil, if coupled with a sufficient explanation; but his interests are paramount; at the same time it becomes me to be allegiant to the divinatory stars. What rivalries the story might awaken! It is not uncommon in history, as thou mayst know, that sons of promise have been cut off by jealous fathers. I am not accusing the great Amurath; nevertheless precautions are always proper."

The speaker then became dramatic.

"Nay, brave Emir, the will to help thee has been already seconded by the deed. I spoke but now of lines of correspondence between the shining lights that are the life of the sky at night. Let me illustrate my meaning. Observe the lamps about us. The five on the uprights. Between them, in the air, two stars of interwoven form are drawn. Take the lamps as determining points, and use thy fancy a moment."

The Emir turned to the lamps; and the host, swift to understand the impulse, gave him time to gratify it; then he resumed:

"So the fields of Heaven between the stars, where the vulgar see only darkness, are filled with traceries infinite in form yet separable as the letters of the alphabet. They are the ciphers in which Allah writes his reasons for every creation, and his will concerning it. There the sands are numbered, and the plants and trees, and their leaves, and the birds, and everything animate; there is thy history, and mine, and all of little and great and good and bad that shall befall us in this life. Death does not blot out the records. Everlastingly writ, they shall be everlastingly read—for the shame of some, for the delight of others."

"Allah is good," said the Emir, bending his head.

"And now," the Mystic continued, "thou hast eaten and drunk with me in the Pentagram of the Magii. Such is the astral drawing between the five lamps. Henceforth in conflicts of interest, fortune against fortune, influences undreamt of will come to thy assistance. So much have I already done for thee."

The Emir bowed lower than before.

"Nor that alone," the Jew continued. "Henceforth our lives will run together on lines never divergent, never crossing. Be not astonished, if, within a week, I furnish, to thy full satisfaction, proof of what I am saying."

The expression could not be viewed except as of more than friendly interest.

"Should it so happen," the Emir said, with warmth, "consider how unfortunate my situation would be, not knowing the name or country of my benefactor."

The host answered simply, though evasively:

"There are reasons of state, O Emir, requiring me to make this pilgrimage unknown to any one."

The Emir apologized.

"It is enough," the host added, "that thou remember me as the Prince of India, whose greatest happiness is to believe in Allah and Mahomet his Prophet; at the same time I concede we should have the means of certainly knowing each other should communication become desirable hereafter."

He made a sign with his right hand which the negro in waiting responded to by passing around in front of him.

"Nilo," the master said in Greek, "bring me the two malachite rings—those with the turquoise eyes."

The slave disappeared.

"Touching the request to be released from the promise of secrecy, pardon me, O Emir, if I decline to grant it. The verification to be made in Constantinople should advise thee that the revolution to which I referred is not ripe for publication to the world. A son might be excused for

dishonoring his parents; but the Magus who would subject the divine science to danger of ridicule or contempt by premature disclosure is fallen past hope—he would betray Allah himself."

The Emir bowed, but with evident discontent. At length the slave returned with the rings.

"Observe, O Emir," the Jew said, passing them both to his guest, "they are rare, curious, and exactly alike."

The circlets were of gold, with raised settings of deep green stone, cut so as to leave a drop of pure turquoise on the top of each, suggestive of birds' eyes.

"They are exactly the same, O Prince," said the Emir, tendering them back.

The Jew waved his hand.

"Select one of them," he said, "and I will retain the other. Borne by messengers, they will always identify us each to the other."

The two grew more cordial, and there was much further conversation across the board, interspersed with attentions to the fruit basket and pomegranate water. About midnight the Emir took his departure. When he was gone, the host walked to and fro a long time; once he halted, and said aloud—"I hear his salute, 'Hail Mahommed, Conqueror of Constantinople !' It is always well to have a store of strings for one's bow."

And to himself he laughed heartily.

Next day at dawn the great caravan was afoot, every man, woman, and child clad in *Ihram*, and whitening the pale green Valley.

CHAPTER VII

AT THE KAABA

The day before the pilgrimage.

A cloud had hung over the valley where Mecca lies like drift in the bed of a winding gorge. About ten o'clock in the morning the cloud disappeared over the summit of Abu Kubays in the east. The promise of rain was followed by a simoom so stifling that it plunged every breathing thing into a struggle for air. The dogs burrowed in the shade of old walls; birds flew about with open beaks; the herbage wilted, and the leaves on the stunted shrubs ruffled, then rolled up, like drying cinnamon. If the denizens of the city found no comfort in their houses of stone and mud, what suffering was there for the multitude not yet fully settled in the blistering plain beyond the bluffs of Arafat?

The zealous pilgrim, obedient to the law, always makes haste to celebrate his arrival at the Holy City by an immediate visit to the Haram. If perchance he is to see the enclosure for the first time, his curiosity, in itself pardonable, derives a tinge of piety from duty. The Prince of India but illustrated the rule. He left his tents pitched close to those of the Emir El Hajj and the Scherif of Mecca, under the Mountain of Mercy, as Arafat was practically translated by the very faithful. Having thus assured the safety of his property, for conveniency and greater personal comfort he took a house with windows looking into the Mosque. By so doing, he maintained the dignity of his character as a Prince of India. The beggars thronging his door furnished lively evidence of the expectations his title and greatness had already excited.

With a guide, his suite, and Nilo shading his head with an umbrella of light green paper, the Prince appeared in front of the chief entrance to the sacred square from the north.**[13]**

The heads of the party were bare; their countenances becomingly solemn; their *Ihram* fresh and spotlessly white. Passing slowly on, they were conducted under several outside arches, and down a stairway into a hall, where they left the umbrella and their shoes.

The visitor found himself then in a cloister of the Mosque with which the area around the Kaaba is completely enclosed. There was a pavement of undressed flags, and to the right and left a wilderness of tall pillars tied together by arches, which in turn supported domes. Numbers of people, bareheaded and barefooted, to whom the heat outside was insupportable, were in refuge there; some, seated upon the stones, revolved their rosaries; others walked slowly about. None spoke. The silence was a tribute to the ineffable sanctity of the place. The refreshing shade, the solemn hush, the whiteness of the garments were suggestive of sepulchres and their spectral tenantry.

In the square whither the Prince next passed, the first object to challenge his attention was the Kaaba itself. At sight of it he involuntarily stopped.

The cloisters, seen from the square, were open colonnades. Seven minarets, belted in red, blue and yellow, arose in columnar relief against the sky and the mountains in the south. A gravelled plot received from the cloisters; next that, toward the centre, was a narrow pavement of rough stone in transverse extension down a shallow step to another gravelled plot; then another pavement wider than the first, and ending, like it, in a downward step; after which there was a third sanded plot, and then a third pavement defined by gilded posts upholding a continuous row of lamps, ready for lighting at the going down of the sun. The last pavement was of gray granite polished mirror–like by the friction of millions of bare feet; and upon it, like the pedestal of a monument upon a plinth, rested the base of the Holy House, a structure of glassy white marble about two feet in height, with a bench of sharp inclination from the top. At intervals it was studded with massive brass rings. Upon the base the Kaaba rose, an oblong cube forty feet tall, eighteen paces lengthwise, and fourteen in breadth, shrouded all in black silk wholly unrelieved, except by one broad band of the appearance of gold, and inscriptions from the Koran, of a like

appearance, wrought in boldest lettering. The freshness of the great gloomy curtain told how quickly the gift of the Sultan had been made available, and that whatever else might betide him, the young Emir was already happily discharged of his trust.

Of the details, the only one the Jew actually coupled with a thought was the Kaaba. A hundred millions of human beings pray five times every day, their faces turned to this funereal object! The idea, though commonplace, called up that other always in waiting with him. In a space too brief for the formulation of words, he felt the Arbitership of his dreams blow away. The work of the founder of Islam was too well done and now too far gone to be disturbed, except with the sanction of God. Had he the sanction? A writhing of the soul, accompanied with a glare, like lightning, and followed, like lightning, by an engulfing darkness, wrung his features, and instinctively he covered them with his hands. The guide saw the action, and misjudged it.

"Let us not be in haste," he said. "Others before you have found the House at first sight blinding. Blessed be Allah!"

The commiseration affected the Prince strangely. The darkness, under pressure of his hands upon the eyeballs, gave place to an atmosphere of roseate light, in the fulness of which he saw the House of God projected by Solomon and rebuilt by Herod. The realism of the apparition was absolute, and comparison unavoidable. That he, familiar with the glory of the conception of the Israelite, should be thought blinded by this *Beit Allah* of the Arab, so without grace of form or lines, so primitive and expressionless, so palpably uninspired by taste, or genius, or the Deity it was designed to honor, restored him at once: indeed, in the succeeding reaction, he found it difficult to keep down resentment. Dropping his hands, he took another survey of the shrouded pile, and swept all the square under eye.

He beheld a crowd of devotees at the northeast corner of the House, and over their heads two small open structures which, from descriptions often heard, he recognized as praying places. A stream of worshippers was circling around the marble base of the Most Holy, some walking, others

trotting; these, arriving at the northeast corner, halted—the Black Stone was there! A babel of voices kept the echoes of the enclosure in unremitting exercise. The view taken, the Jew said, calmly:

"Blessed be Allah! I will go forward."

In his heart he longed to be in Constantinople—Islam, it was clear, would lend him no ear; Christendom might be more amenable.

He was carried next through the Gate of the Sons of the Old Woman; thence to the space in front of the well Zem–Zem; mindful of the prayers and prostrations required at each place, and of the dumb servants who went with him.

The famous well was surrounded by a throng apparently impassable.

"Room for the Royal Hadji—for the Prince of India!" the guide yelled. "There are no poor where he is—make way!"

A thousand eyes sought the noble pilgrim; and as a path opened for him, a score of *Zem–Zemis* refilled their earthen cups with the bitter water afresh. A Prince of Hind did not come to them every day.

He tasted from a cup—his followers drank—and when the party turned away there were jars paid for to help all the blind in the caravan back to healthful vision.

"There is no God but Allah! Be merciful to him, O Allah," the crowd shouted, in approval of the charity.

The press of pilgrims around the northeastern corner of the Kaaba, to which the guide would have conducted the Prince next, was greater than at the well. Each was waiting his turn to kiss the Black Stone before beginning the seven circuits of the House.

Never had the new–comer seen a concourse so wrought upon by fanaticism; never had he seen a concourse so peculiarly constituted. All complexions, even that of the interior African, were a reddish desert tan. Eyes fiercely bright appeared unnaturally swollen from the colirium with which they were generally stained. The diversities the penitential costume would have masked were effectually exposed whenever mouths opened for utterance. Many sang, regardless of time or melody, the *tilbiye* they had

hideously vocalized in their advance toward the city. For the most part, however, the effort at expression spent itself in a long cry, literally rendered—"Thou hast called me—I am here! I am here!" The deliverance was in the vernacular of the devotee, and low or loud, shrill or hoarse, according to the intensity of the passion possessing him.

To realize the discordancy, the reader must recall the multiplicity of the tribes and nations represented; then will he fancy the agitation of the mass, the swaying of the white–clad bodies, the tossing of bare arms and distended hands, the working of tearful faces turned up to the black–curtained pile regardless of the smiting of the sun—here men on their knees, there men grovelling on the pavement—yonder one beating his breast till it resounds like an empty cask—some comprehension of the living obstruction in front of the Jew can be had.

Then the guide, calling him, tried the throng.

"The Prince of India!" he shouted, at the top of his voice. "Room for the beloved of the Prophet! Stand not in his way—Room, room!"

After much persistence the object was achieved. A pilgrim, the last one in front of the Prince, with arms extended along the two sides of the angle of the wall where the curtain was looped up, seemed struggling to embrace the House; suddenly, as in despair he beat his head frantically against the sharp corner—a second thrust more desperate than the first—then a groan, and he dropped blindly to the pavement. The guide rejoicing made haste to push the Prince into the vacant place.

Without the enthusiasm of a traveller, calmly as a philosopher, the Jew, himself again, looked at the Stone which more nearly than any other material thing commanded idolatrous regard from the Mohammedan world. He had known personally most of the great men of that world—its poets, lawmakers, warriors, ascetics, kings—even the Prophet. And now they came one by one, as one by one they had come in their several days, and kissed the insensate thing; and between the coming and going time was scarcely perceptible. The mind has the faculty of compressing, by one mighty effort, the incidents of a life, even of centuries, into a flash–like reenactment.

As all the way from the first view of the sanctuary to arrival at the gate, and thence to this point, the Jew had promptly followed his guide, especially in recitation of the prescribed prayers, he was about to do so now; already his hands were raised.

"Great God! O my God! I believe in Thee—I Believe in thy Book—I believe in thy Word—I believe in thy Promise," the zealous prompter said, and waited.

For the first time the votary was slow to respond. How could he, at such a juncture, refuse a thought to the Innumerables whose ghosts had been rendered up in vain struggles to obey the law which required them to come and make proof of faith before this Stone! The Innumerables, lost at sea, lost in the desert—lost body and soul, as in their dying they themselves had imagined! Symbolism! An invention of men—a necessity of necromancers! God had his ministers and priests, the living media of his will, but of symbols—nothing!

"Great God! O my God!" the guide began again. A paroxysm of disgust seized the votary. The Phariseeism in which he was born and bred, and which he could no more outlive than he could outlive his body asserted itself.

In the crisis of the effort at self–control, he heard a groan, and, looking down, saw the mad devotee at his feet. In sliding from the shelf of the base, the man had been turned upon his back, so that he was lying face upward. On the forehead there were two cruel wounds; and the blood, yet flowing, had partially filled the hollows of the eyes, making the countenance unrecognizable.

"The wretch is dying," the Prince exclaimed.

"Allah is merciful—let us attend to the prayers," the guide returned, intent on business.

"But he will die, if not helped."

"When we have finished, the porters will come for him."

The sufferer stirred, then raised a hand.

"O Hadji—O Prince of India!" he said faintly, in Italian.

The Wanderer bent down to get a nearer view.

"It is the Yellow Air—save me!"

Though hardly articulate, the words were full of light to the listener.

"The virtues of the Pentagram endure," he said, with absolute self–possession. "The week is not ended, and, lo!—I save him."

Rising to his full stature, he glanced here and there over the throng, as if commanding attention, and proclaimed:

"A mercy of the Most Merciful! It is the Emir El Hajj."

There was a general silence. Every man had seen the martial figure of the young chief in his arms and armor, and on horseback; many of them had spoken to him.

"The Emir El Hajj—dying," passed rapidly from mouth to mouth.

"O Allah!" burst forth in general refrain; after which the ejaculations were all excerpted from prayers.

"'O Allah! This is the place of him who flies to thee from fire!—Shadow him, O Allah, in thy shadow!—Give him drink from the cup of thy Prophet!'"

A Bedouin, tall, almost black, and with a tremendous mouth open until the red lining was exposed between the white teeth down to the larynx, shouted shrilly the inscription on the marble over the breast of the Prophet—"In the name of Allah! Allah have mercy upon him!"—and every man repeated the words, but not one so much as reached a hand in help.

The Prince waited—still the *Amins*, and prayerful ejaculations. Then his wonder ceased. Not a pilgrim but envied the Emir—that he should die so young was a pity—that he should die at the base of the sanctuary, in the crowning act of the Hajj, was a grace of God. Each felt Paradise stooping low to receive a martyr, and that its beatitude was near. They trembled with ecstasy at hearing the gates opening on their crystal hinges, and seeing light as from the robe of the Prophet glimmering through them. O happy Emir!

The Jew drew within himself. Compromise with such fanaticism was impossible. Then, with crushing distinctness, he saw what had not before

occurred to him. In the estimation of the Mohammedan world, the role of Arbiter was already filled; that which he thought of being, Mahomet was. Too late, too late! In bitterness of soul he flung his arms up and shouted:

"The Emir is dying of the plague!"

He would have found satisfaction in seeing the blatant crowd take to its heels, and hie away into the cloisters and the world outside; not one moved!

"By Allah!" he shouted, more vehemently than before. "The Yellow Air hath blown upon the Emir—is blowing upon you—Fly!"

"*Amin! Amin!*—Peace be with thee, O Prince of Martyrs! O Prince of the Happy! Peace be with thee, O Lion of Allah! O Lion of the Prophet!" Such the answers returned him.

The general voice became a howl. Surely here was something more than fanaticism. Then it entered his understanding. What he beheld was Faith exulting above the horrors of disease, above the fear of death—Faith bidding Death welcome! His arms fell down. The crowd, the sanctuary, the hopes he had built on Islam, were no more to him. He signed to his three attendants, and they advanced and raised the Emir from the pavement.

"To–morrow I will return with thee, and complete my vows;" he said to his guide. "For the present, lead out of the square to my house."

The exit was effected without opposition.

Next day the Emir, under treatment of the Prince, was strong enough to tell his story. The plague had struck him about noon of the day following the interview in the tent at El Zaribah. Determined to deliver the gifts he had in keeping, and discharge his trust to the satisfaction of his sovereign, he struggled resolutely with the disease. After securing the Scherif's receipt he bore up long enough to superintend the pitching his camp. Believing death inevitable, he was carried into his tent, where he issued his final orders and bade his attendants farewell. In the morning, though weak, half–delirious, his faith the strongest surviving impulse, he called for his horse, and being lifted into the saddle, rode to the city, resolved to

assure himself of the blessings of Allah by dying in the shadow of the sanctuary.

The Prince, listening to the explanation, was more than ever impressed with the futility of attempting a compromise with people so devoted to their religion. There was nothing for him but to make haste to Constantinople, the centre of Christian sentiment and movement. There he might meet encouragement and ultimate success.

In the ensuing week, having performed the two pilgrimages, and seen the Emir convalescent, he took the road again, and in good time reached Jedda, where he found his ship waiting to convey him across the Red Sea to the African coast. The embarkation was without incident, and he departed, leaving a reputation odorous for sanctity, with numberless witnesses to carry it into every quarter of Islam.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ARRIVAL IN CONSTANTINOPLE

Uel, the son of Jahdai, was in the habit of carrying the letter received from the mysterious stranger about with him in a breast pocket. How many times a day he took it out for reexamination would be difficult to say. Observing the appearance of signs of usage, he at length wrapped it in an envelope of yellow silk. If he had thought less of it, he would have resorted to plain linen.

There were certain points in the missive which seemed of greater interest to him than others. For example, the place whence it had been addressed was an ever recurring puzzle; he also dwelt long upon the sentence which referred so delicately to a paternal relationship. The most exigent passages, however, were those relative to the time he might look for the man's coming. As specially directed, he had taken note of the day of the delivery of the letter, and was greatly surprised to find the messenger had arrived the last day of the year permitted him. The punctuality of the servant might be in imitation of a like virtue of the master. If so, at the uttermost, the latter might be expected six months after receipt of the letter. Or he might appear within the six months. The journeys laid out were of vast distances, and through wild and dangerous countries, and by sea as well. Only a good traveller could survive them at all; to execute them in such brief space seemed something superhuman.

So it befell that the son of Jahdai was at first but little concerned. The months—three, four, five—rolled away, and the sixth was close at hand; then every day brought him an increase of interest. In fact, he found himself looking for the arrival each morning, and at noon promising it an event of the evening.

November was the sixth and last month of the time fixed. The first of that month passed without the stranger. Uel became anxious. The fifteenth

he turned the keeping of his shop over to a friend; and knowing the passage from Alexandria must be by sea, he betook himself, with Syama, to the port on the Golden Horn known as the Gate of St. Peter, at the time most frequented by Egyptian sailing masters. In waiting there, he saw the sun rise over the heights of Scutari, and it was the morning of the very last day. Syama, meantime, occupied himself in final preparation of the house for the reception. He was not excited, like Uel, because he had no doubt of the arrival within the period set. He was also positively certain of finding his master, when at length he did appear, exactly as when he separated from him in Cipango. He was used to seeing Time waste itself upon the changeless man; he had even caught from him a kind of contempt for what other men shrank from as dangers and difficulties.

The site of the house has been described; it remains to give the reader an idea of its interior. There were four rooms on the ground floor furnished comfortably for servants, of whom the arrangement indicated three besides Syama. The first floor was of three apartments communicable by doorways with portieres of camel's hair. The furniture was Roman, Greek, and Egyptian mixed. Of the three the middle chamber was largest, and as its fittings were in a style of luxury supposed to be peculiar to princes, the conclusion was fair that it was designed for the proprietor's occupancy during his waking hours. A dark blue rug clothed the floor. In the centre, upon a shield of clear copper, arose a silver brazier. The arms and legs of the stools here and there on the rug were carven in grotesque imitation of reptiles and animals of the ultra dragonish mode. The divans against the walls were of striped silk. In each corner stood a tall post of silvered bronze, holding at the end of a graceful crook several lamps of Pompeiian model. A wide window in the east end, filled with plants in bloom, admitted ample light, which, glancing through the flowers, fell on a table dressed in elegant cloth, and bearing a lacquered waiter garnished with cups of metal and glass, and one hand–painted porcelain decanter for drinking water. An enormous tiger–skin, the head intact and finished with extraordinary realism, was spread on the floor in front of the table. The walls were brilliant with fresh Byzantine frescoing. The air of the room

was faintly pervaded with a sweet incense of intoxicating effect upon one just admitted to it. Indeed the whole interior partook of this sweetness.

The care of the faithful servant had not been confined to the rooms; he had constructed a summer house upon the roof, knowing that when the weather permitted his master would pass the nights there in preference to the chambers below. This structure looked not unlike a modern belfry, except that the pillars and shallow dome of the top were of Moorish lightness. Thence, to a familiar, the heavens in the absence of the sun would be an unrolled map.

When the last touch of the preparation had been given, and Syama said to himself, "He may come now," one point was especially noticeable—nowhere in the house was there provision for a woman.

The morning of the last day Syama accompanied Uel to the port reluctantly. Feeling sure his master had not arrived in the night, he left his friend on the watch, and returned home early.

The noise and stir of business at the ancient landing were engaging. With a great outcry, a vessel would be drawn up, and made fast, and the unloading begun. A drove of donkeys, or a string of camels, or a mob of porters would issue from the gate, receive the cargo and disappear with it. Now and then a ship rounded the classic Point, its square sail bent and all the oars at work: sweeping past Galata on the north side of the Horn, then past the Fish Market Gate on the south, up it would come gracefully as a flying bird; if there was place for it at the quay, well; if not, after hovering around awhile, it would push out to a berth in the open water. Such incidents were crises to Uel. To this one and to that he would run with the question:

"Where is she from?"

If from the upper sea, he subsided; but if from the Marmora, he kept eager lookout upon her, hoping to recognize in every disembarkee the man he was expecting.

That he had never seen the person was of little consequence. He had thought of him so much awake, and seen him so repeatedly in dreams, he was confident of knowing him at sight. Imagining a stranger's appearance

is for the most part a gentle tribute of respect; the mistakes we make are for the most part ludicrous.

No one answering the preconception came. Noon, and still no one; then, cast down and disappointed, Uel went home, ate something, held the usual childish dialogue with his little girl, and about mid afternoon crossed the street to the new residence. Great was his astonishment at finding a pyramid of coals glowing in the silver brazier, and the chill already driven from the sitting–room. Here—there—upstairs, downstairs—the signs were of present occupancy. For a moment he thought the master had slipped by him or landed at some other port of the city.

"Is he here? Has he come?" he asked, excitedly, and Syama answered with a shake of the head.

"Then why the fire?"

Syama, briefly waving his hand as if following the great Marmorean lake, turned the finger ends into the other palm, saying plainly and emphatically:

"He is coming—he will be here directly."

Uel smiled—faith could not be better illustrated—and it was so in contrast with his own incredulity!

He lingered awhile. Restlessness getting the mastery, he returned home, reflecting on the folly of counting so implicitly upon the conclusion to a day of a tour so vast. More likely, he thought, the traveller's bones were somewhere whitening the desert, or the savages of Kash–Cush had eaten him. He had heard of their cannibalism.

Want of faith, however, did not prevent the shopkeeper from going to his friend's house after supper. It was night, and dark, and the chilling moisture of a winter wind blowing steadily from the Black Sea charged the world outside with discomfort. The brazier with its heap of living coals had astonished him before; now the house was all alight! He hastened upstairs. In the sitting–room the lamps were burning, and the illumination was brilliant. Syama was there, calm and smiling as usual.

"What—he is here?" Uel said, looking from door to door.

The servant shook his head, and waved his hand negatively, as to say:

"Not yet—be patient—observe me."

To indulge his wonder, Uel took seat. Later on he tried to get from Syama an explanation of his amazing confidence, but the latter's substitute for speech was too limited and uncertain to be satisfactory.

About ten o'clock Syama went below, and presently returned with food and drink on a large waiter.

"Ah, good Lord!" Uel thought. "He is making a meal ready. What a man! What a master!"

Then he gave attention to the fare, which was of wheaten wafers, cold fowl, preserved fruits, and wine in a stoneware bottle. These Syama set on a circular table not higher than the divan in front of which it was drawn. A white napkin and a bowl for laving the fingers completed the preparation, as Uel supposed. But no. Syama went below again, and reappeared with a metal pot and a small wooden box. The pot he placed on the coals in the brazier, and soon a delicate volume of steam was pouring from the spout; after handling the box daintily as if the contents were vastly precious, he deposited it unopened by the napkin and bowl. Then, with an expression of content upon his face, he too took seat, and surrendered himself to expectancy. The lisping of the steam escaping from the pot on the fire was the only sound in the room.

The assurance of the servant was contagious. Uel began to believe the master would come. He was congratulating himself upon the precaution he had taken in leaving a man at the port to conduct him rightly when he heard a shuffling of feet below stairs. He listened startled. There were several men in the company. Steps shook the floor. Uel and Syama arose.

The latter's countenance flushed with pleasure; giving one triumphal glance at his friend, much as to say, There—did I not tell you so? he walked forward quickly, and reached the head of the steps just as a stranger finished their ascent. In a moment Syama was on his knees, kissing the hand held out to him. Uel needed no prompter—it was the master!

If only on account of the mutuality of affection shown between the two, the meeting was a pleasant sight. That feature, however, was lost to the shopkeeper, who had no thought except of the master's appearance. He had imagined him modelled after the popular conceptions of kings and warriors—tall, majestic, awe–inspiring. He saw instead a figure rather undersized, slightly stoop–shouldered, thin; at least it seemed so then, hid as it was under a dark brown burnoose of the amplitude affected by Arab sheiks. The head was covered by a woollen handkerchief of reddish tint, held by a scarlet cord. The edge of the handkerchief projected over the forehead enough to cast the entire face in shade, leaving to view only a mass of white beard overflowing the breast.

The master ended the reception at the head of the stairs by gently raising Syama to his feet. Then he subjected the room to a swift inspection, and, in proof of satisfaction, he patted the happy retainer on the shoulder. Invited by the fire, and the assurance of comfort in its glow, he advanced to the brazier, and while extending his hands over it, observed Uel. Without surprise or hesitation he walked to him.

"Son of Jahdai!" he said, offering his hand.

The voice was of exceeding kindness. As an overture to peace and goodwill, it was reenforced by very large eyes, the intense blackness of which was softened by a perceptible glow of pleasure. Uel was won on the instant. A recollection of the one supreme singularity of the new acquaintance—his immunity from death—recurred to him, and he could not have escaped its effect had he wished. He was conscious also that the eyes were impressing him. Without distinct thought, certainly without the slightest courtierly design, he obeyed the impulse of the moment, and stooped and touched the extended hand with his lips. And before rising he heard the beginning of further speech:

"I see the truth of my judgment. The family of my ancient friends has trodden the ways of righteousness under the commandments of the Lord until it has become a kind unto itself. I see too my trust has been verified. O Son of Jahdai, you did assist my servant, as I requested, and to your

kindness, doubtless, I am indebted for this home full of comforts after a long absence among strangers. I hold you my creditor."

The tendency of the speech was to relieve Uel of embarrassment.

"Do not thank me," he answered. "The business was ordinary, and strictly within Syama's capacity. Indeed, the good man could have finished it without my help."

The master, rich in experience, noticed the deferential manner of the reply, and was agreeably assured on his side.

"Very well. There will be no harm in reserving an opinion," he said. "The good man, as you call him, is making ready a drink with which he has preceded me from his country, and which you must stay and share, as it is something unknown in the West."

"Let me first welcome you here," Uel returned.

"Oh, I saw the welcome in your face. But let us get nearer the fire. The night is chilling. If I were owner of a garden under whatever hill along the Bosphorus, verily I should tremble for my roses."

Thus briefly, and in such simple manner, the wise Mystic put the shopkeeper perfectly at ease.

At the brazier they watched Syama in the operation since become of universal knowledge under title of "drawing tea." The fragrance of the decoction presently filled the room to the suppression of the incense, and they drank, ate, and were sociable. The host outlined his travels. Uel, in return, gave him information of the city. When the latter departed, it was with a light heart, and an elastic step; the white beard and patriarchal manner of the man had laid his fears, and the future was to him like a cloudless sky.

Afterwhile the master signified a wish to retire; whereupon his household came, as was their wont, to bid him good–night. Of these there were two white men. At sight of Syama, they rushed to embrace him as became brethren of old acquaintance long in the same service. A third one remained at the door. Syama looked at him, and then at the master; for the man was a stranger. Then the Jew, with quick intuition of the requirement

of the time, went, and took him by the hand, and led him to the others. Addressing Syama, he said gravely:

"This is Nilo, son of the Nilo whom you knew. As you held the father in love, so you shall hold the son."

The man was young, very black, and gigantic in stature. Syama embraced him as he had the others.

In the great city there was not a more united household under roof than that of the shopkeeper's friend.

CHAPTER IX

THE PRINCE AT HOME

A wise man wishing to know another always attends him when he is in narrative. The reader may be familiar with the principle, and a believer in it; for his better satisfaction, therefore, a portion of the Prince's conversation with Uel over the tea–table the night of his arrival in Constantinople shall be reported nearly as possible in his own words. It will be found helpful to the story as well as an expose of character.

"I said in my letter, as thou mayst remember, O son of Jahdai"—the voice of the speaker was low, but earnest, and admirably in harmony with the sentiment, "that I hoped thou wouldst allow me to relate myself to thee as father to son. Thou hast not forgotten it, I am sure."

"I recall it distinctly," Uel answered, respectfully.

"Thou wilt remember not less clearly then that I added the words, 'in all things a help, in nothing a burden.'"

Uel assented.

"The addition I thought of great importance," the Prince continued; "for it was very desirable that thou shouldst not imagine me coming to sit down upon thee, and in idleness fatten upon the fruits of thy industry. As something of even greater importance, thou shouldst know now, at this earliest moment of our intercourse, that I am abundantly able from what I have of goods and treasure to keep any condition I may choose to assume. Indeed thou shouldst not be too much astonished did I practise the style and manner of the nobles who are privileged in the palaces of thy Caesar. At home I shall be as thou seest me now, thy friend of simplest habits, because my tastes really incline to them; when I go abroad, the officials of the Church and State whom I chance to encounter shall be challenged to comparison of appearance, and be piqued to inquire about me. Then when the city observes thou art intimate with me, the demand for thy wares will

increase; thou mayst even be put to stress to keep apace with it. In speaking thus, I trust thy natural shrewdness, sharpened as it must have become by much dealing as a merchant."

He paused here to give his cup to Syama for replenishment; whereupon Uel said: "I have followed thy discourse with interest, and I hope with understanding; yet I am conscious of a disadvantage. I do not know thy name, nor if thou hast a title."

"Yes, and thou mightest have set down in the table of defaults," the Wanderer began pleasantly in reply, but broke off to receive the cup smoking hot from the servant, and say—"Thanks, Syama. I see thy hand hath not lost its deftness; neither has the green leaf suffered from its long journey over the sea."

Uel noticed with what intentness Syama watched the master's lips while he was speaking, and the gratification that beamed from his face in answer to the compliment; and he thought, "Verily this must be a good man to be so beloved by his dependents."

"I was saying, O son of Jahdai, that thou mightest have set down the other points of information equally necessary to our intercourse—Whence I come? And why? And I will not leave thee in the dark respecting them. Only let me caution thee—It is not required that the public should be taken into our confidence. I have seen a flower good to look upon, but viscous, and with a scent irresistible to insects. That flower represents the world; and what is the folly of its victims but the madness of men who yield themselves with too easy faith to the seductions of the world? Nay, my son—observe thou the term—I use it to begin the relationship I seek—observe also I begin the relationship by confidences which were unwisely given without the injunction that they are intended to be put away in thy inner–conscience. Tell me if I am understood."

The question was emphasized by a look whose magnetism thrilled Uel's every nerve.

"I believe I understand you," he replied.

Then, as if the Prince knew the effect he had wrought, and that it relieved him from danger of betrayal, he returned to his former easy manner.

"And yet, as thou shalt see, my son, the confidences are not crimes—But thy cup is empty, and Syama waiting for it."

"The drink is new to me," Uel replied, yielding to the invitation.

"New? And wilt thou not also say it is better than wine? The world of which we are talking, will one day take up the admission, and be happier of it."

Turning then to serious matter:

"Afterwhile," he said, "thou wilt be importuned by the curious to know who I am, and thou shouldst be able to answer according to the fact—He is a Prince of India. The vulgar will be satisfied with the reply. Others will come demanding more. Refer them to me. As to thyself, O son of Jahdai, call me as I have instructed thee to speak of me—call me Prince. At the same time I would have thee know that on my eighth day I was carried into a temple and registered a son of a son of Jerusalem. The title I give thee for my designation did not ennoble me. The birthright of a circumcised heritor under the covenant with Israel is superior to every purely human dignity whatever its derivation."

"In other words, O Prince, thou art"—Uel hesitated.

"A Jew!" the other answered promptly—"A Jew, as thy father was—as thou art."

The look of pleasure that appeared on the shopkeeper's face was swiftly interpreted by the Prince, who felt he had indeed evoked a tie of blood, and bound the man with it.

"So much is despatched," he said, with evident satisfaction; then, after a draught from the tea–cup, and a re–delivery to Syania for more, he continued: "Possibly thou wilt also remember my letter mentions a necessity for my crossing from India to Mecca on the way to Kash–Cush, and that, despite the stoppage, I hoped to greet thee in person within six months after Syama reported himself. How stands the time?"

"This is the last day of the six months," Uel answered.

"Yes, there was never man"—the Prince paused, as if the thought were attended with a painful recollection—"never a man," he presently

resumed, "who kept account of time more exactly than myself."

A copious draught of tea assuaged the passing regret.

"I wrote the letter while in Cipango, an island of the great eastern sea. Thirty years after I set foot upon its shore, theretofore unvisited by a white man, a countryman of ours from this city, the sole survivor of a shipwreck, joined me. From him I heard of thy father's death. He also gave me thy name… My life on the island was comparatively untroubled. Indeed, for thy perfect comprehension, my son, it is best to make an explanation now; then thou wilt have a key to many things in my conduct to come as well as conduct gone which would otherwise keep thee in doubtful reflection. The study of greatest interest is religion. I have travelled the world over—I mean the inhabited parts—and in its broad extent there is not a people without worship of some kind. Wherefore my assertion, that beyond the arts, above the sciences, above commerce, above any or all other human concernments, religion is the superlative interest. It alone is divine. The study of it is worship. Knowledge of it is knowledge of God. Can as much be said of any other subject?"

Uel did not answer; he was following the speech too intently, and the Prince, seeing it, drank again, and proceeded:

"The divine study took me to Cipango. Fifty years thou mayst say to thyself was a long term in such a country. Not so, my son. I found there two faiths; the one Sin–Siu, which I turned my back upon as mythologic, without the poetry of the Greek and Roman; the other—well, a life given to the laws of Buddha were well spent. To say truth, there is such similitude between them and the teachings of him we are in the habit of calling the carpenter's son that, if I did not know better, it were easy to believe the latter spent the years of his disappearance in some Buddhistic temple… Leaving explanation to another time, the same study carried me to Mecca. The binding of men, the putting yokes about their necks, trampling them in the dust, are the events supposed most important and therefore most noticeable in history; but they are as nothing in comparison with winning belief in matters indeterminable by familiar tests. The process there is so mysterious, the achievement so miraculous that where

the operator is vastly successful one may well look under them for the permission of God. The day was when Islamism did but stir contemptuous laughter; now it is the faith acceptable to more men than any other. Is it not worthy the vigils of a student? And then it happens, my son, that in the depths of their delusion, people sometimes presume to make their own gods, and reform them or cast them out. Deities have been set up or thrown down by their makers in the changes of a moon. I wanted to see if such calamity had befallen the Allah of Mahomet… My going to Kash–Cush was on what thou wouldst call business, and of it I will also tell thee. At Jedda, whither I betook myself after making the pilgrimages at Mecca, I regained my ship, and descended the Red Sea, landing at a village on the extreme inland shore of the bay of Tajurrah, below the Straits of Bab–el–Mandel. I was then in Kash–Cush. From the village on the coast, I passed into the interior, travelling in a litter on the shoulders of native porters, and, after many days, reached my destination—a collection of bungalows pitched on the bank of a tributary of the Blue Nile called the Dedhesa. The journey would have been difficult and tedious but that one of my attendants—a black man—had been king of the tribe I sought. His name was Nilo, and his tribe paramount throughout the uncivilized parts of Kash–Cush. More than fifty years before,—prior, in fact, to my setting out for Cipango,—I made the same tour, and found the king. He gave me welcome; and so well did he please me that I invited him to share my wanderings. He accepted the proposal upon condition that in his old age he should be returned home, and exchanged for a younger man of his blood. I agreed, provided one younger could be found who, besides the requisite physique and the virtues of intellect and courage, was also deaf and dumb, like himself. A treaty was thus perfected. I call it a treaty as distinct from a purchase, for Nilo was my friend and attendant—my ally, if you please—never my slave. There was a reception for us the like of which for feasting and merriment was without mention in the traditions of the tribe. A grandson filled my friend's throne; but he gave it back to him, and voluntarily took his place with me. Thou shalt see him to–morrow. I call him Nilo, and spend the morning hours teaching him to talk; for while he keeps me reminded of a Greek demi–god—so tall, strong and brave is he

—he is yet deaf and dumb, and has to be taught as Syama was. When thou hast to do with him be gentle and courteous. I wish it kept in mind he is my friend and ally, bound to me by treaty as his grandfather was… The only part of the tour given thee in my letter which I omitted was the descent of the Nile. Having performed it before, my curiosity was sated, and I allowed my impatience to be in thy city here to determine my course. I made way back to the village on the bay of Tajurrah where, in anticipation of such a change, my vessel was held in detention. Thence, up the sea and across the Isthmus, I proceeded to Alexandria, and to–night happily find myself at home, in hope of rest for my body and renewal of my spirit."

With this, the explanation appeared concluded; for the Prince notified Syama that he did not desire more tea, and lapsed into a thoughtful silence. Presently Uel arose, saying: "You must be weary. With permission I will take my leave now. I confess you have given me much to think over, and made me happy by taking me into your confidence. If it be agreeable, I will call at noon to–morrow."

The Prince went with him to the head of the stairs, and there bade him peace and good–night.

CHAPTER X

THE ROSE OF SPRING

The Prince, as the Jew preferred to be called, kept his house closely quite a month, resting, not hibernating. He took exercise daily on the flat roof; and walking to and fro there, found three objects of attraction: the hill to the southwest with the church upon it, the Palace of Blacherne off further in the west, and the Tower of Galata. The latter, across the Golden Horn in the north, arose boldly, like a light–house on a cliff; yet, for a reason—probably because it had connection with the subject of his incessant meditations—he paused oftenest to gaze at the Palace.

He was in his study one day deeply absorbed. The sun, nearing meridian, poured a stream of white light through the south window, flooding the table at which he sat. That the reader may know something of the paths the Mystic most frequented when in meditation, we will make free with one of the privileges belonging to us as a chronicler.

The volume directly in front of him on the table, done in olive wood strengthened at the corners with silver, was near two feet in length, and one and a half in width; when closed, it would be about one foot thick. Now he had many wonderful rare and rich *antiques*, but none so the apple of his eye as this; for it was one of the fifty Holy Bibles of Greek transcription ordered by Constantine the Great.

At his right, held flat by weights, were the *Sacred Books* of China, in form a roll of broad–leafed vellum.

At his left, a roll somewhat similar in form and at the moment open, lay the *Rig–Veda* of the Aryans in Sanscrit.

The fourth book was the *Avesta* of Zoroaster—a collection of MSS. stitched together, and exquisitely rendered by Parse devas into the Zend language.

A fifth book was the *Koran*.

The arrangement of the volumes around the Judean Bible was silently expressive of the student's superior respect; and as from time to time, after reading a paragraph from one of the others, he returned to the great central treasure, it was apparent he was making a close comparison of texts with reference to a particular theme, using the Scriptures as a standard. Most of the time he kept the forefinger of his left hand on what is now known as the fourteenth verse of the third chapter of Exodus—"And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." If, as the Prince himself had declared, religion were indeed the study of most interest to the greatest number of men, he was logically consistent in comparing the definitions of *God* in the Bibles of theistic nations. So had he occupied himself since morning. The shrewd reader will at once discern the theme of his comparative study.

At length he grew weary of bending over the books, and of the persistent fixedness of attention required for the pursuit of fine shades of meaning in many different languages. He threw his arms up in aid of a yawn, and turned partly around, his eyes outrunning the movement of his body. The half–introverted glance brightened with a gleam, and remained fixed, while the arms dropped down. He could only look in wonder at what he saw—eyes black and almost large as his own gazing at him in timid surprise. Beholding nothing but the eyes, he had the awesome feeling which attends imagining a spirit suddenly risen; then he saw a forehead low, round, and white, half shaded by fluffs of dark hair; then a face of cherubic color and regularity, to which the eyes gave an indefinable innocency of expression.

Every one knows the effect of trifles on the memory. A verse or a word, the smell of a flower, a lock of hair, a turn in music, will not merely bring the past back, but invest it with a miraculous recurrency of events. The Prince's gaze endured. He stretched his hand out as if fearful lest what he saw might vanish. The gesture was at once an impulse and an expression. There was a time—tradition says it was the year in which he provoked the

curse—when he had wife and child. To one of them, possibly both, the eyes then looking into his might have belonged. The likeness unmanned him. The hand he stretched forth fell lightly upon the head of the intruder.

"What are you?" he said.

The vagueness of the expression will serve excellently as a definition of his condition; at the same time it plunged the child addressed into doubt. Presently she answered:

"I am a little girl."

Accepting the simplicity of the reply as evidence of innocency too extreme for fear, he took the visitor in his arms, and sat her on his knee.

"I did not mean to ask what you are, but who?" he said.

"Uel is my father."

"Uel? Well, he is my friend, and I am his; therefore you and I should be friends. What is your name?"

"He calls me Gul Bahar."

"Oh! That is Turkish, and means Rose of Spring. How came you by it?"

"My mother was from Iconium."

"Yes—where the Sultans used to live."

"And she could speak Turkish."

"I see! Gul Bahar is an endearment, not a real name."

"My real name is Lael."

The Prince paled from cheek to brow; his lips trembled; the arm encircling her shook; and looking into his eyes, she saw tears dim them. After a long breath, he said, with inexpressible tenderness, and as if speaking to one standing just behind her—"Lael!" Then, the tears full formed, he laid his forehead on her shoulder so his white hair blent freely with her chestnut locks; and sitting passively, but wondering, she heard him sob and sob again and again, like another child. Soon, from pure sympathy, unknowing why, she too began sobbing. Several minutes passed thus; then, raising his face, and observing her responsive sorrow, he felt the need of explanation.

"Forgive me," he said, kissing her, "and do not wonder at me. I am old—very old—older than thy father, and there have been so many things to distress me which other men know nothing of, and never can. I had once"—

He stopped, repeated the long breath, and gazed as at a far object.

"I too had once a little girl."

Pausing, he dropped his eyes to hers.

"How old are you?"

"Next spring I shall be fourteen," she answered.

"And she was just your age, and so like you—so small, and with such hair and eyes and face; and she was named Lael. I wanted to call her *Rimah*, for she seemed a song to me; but her mother said, as she was a gift from the Lord, she wanted in the fulness of days to give her back to him, and that the wish might become a covenant, she insisted on calling her Lael, which, in Hebrew—thy father's tongue and mine—means To God."

The child, listening with all her soul, was now not in the least afraid of him; without waiting, she made the application.

"You loved her, I know," she said

"How much—Oh, how much!"

"Where is she now?"

"At Jerusalem there was a gate called the Golden Gate. It looked to the east. The sun, rising over the top of Mount Olivet, struck the plates of gold and Corinthian brass more precious than gold, so it seemed one rosy flame. The dust at its rocky sill, and the ground about it are holy. There, deep down, my Lael lies. A stone that tasked many oxen to move it covers her; yet, in the last day, she will be among the first to rise—Of such excellence is it to be buried before that Golden Gate."

"Oh! she is dead!" the child exclaimed.

"She is dead;" and seeing her much affected, he hastened to say, "I shed many tears thinking of her. Ah, how gentle and truthful she was! And how beautiful! I cannot forget her. I would not if I could; but you who look so

like her will take her place in my heart now, and love me as she did; and I will love you even as I loved her. I will take you into my life, believing she has come again. In the morning I will ask first, Where is my Lael? At noon, I will demand if the day has been kind to her; and the night shall not be half set in except I know it has brought her the sweetness of sleep. Will you be my Lael?"

The question perplexed the child, and she was silent.

Again he asked, "Will you be my Lael?"

The earnestness with which he put the question was that of a hunger less for love than an object to love. The latter is not often accounted a passion, yet it creates necessities which are peremptory as those of any passion. One of the incidents of the curse he was suffering was that he knew the certainty of the coming of a day when he must be a mourner for whomsoever he should take into his heart, and in this way expiate whatever happiness the indulgence might bring him. Nevertheless the craving endured, at times a positive hunger. In other words, his was still a human nature. The simplicity and beauty of the girl were enough to win him of themselves; but when she reminded him of the other asleep under a great rock before the gate of the Holy City, when the name of the lost one was brought to him so unexpectedly, it seemed there had been a resurrection, making it possible for him to go about once more as he was accustomed to in his first household. A third time he asked, "You will be my Lael?"

"Can I have two fathers?" she returned.

"Oh, yes!" he answered quickly. "One in fact, the other by adoption; and they can both love you the same."

Immediately her face became a picture of childish trust.

"Then I will be your Lael too."

He clasped her close to his breast, and kissed her, crying:

"My Lael has come back to me! God of my fathers, I thank thee!"

She respected his emotion, but at length, with her hand upon his shoulder, said:

"You and my father are friends, and thinking he came here, I came too."

"Is he at home?"

"I think so."

"Then we will go to him. You cannot be my Lael without his consent."

Presently, hand in hand, they descended the stairs, crossed the street, and were in the shopkeeper's presence.

The room was plainly but comfortably furnished as became the proprietor's fortune and occupation. Closer acquaintance, it is to be said, had dissipated the latent dread, which, as has been seen, marked Uel's first thought of intimacy between the stranger and the child. Seeing him old, and rich, and given to study, not to say careless of ordinary things, the father was beginning to entertain the idea that it might in some way be of advantage to the child could she become an object of interest to him. Wherefore, as they entered now, he received them with a smile.

Traces of the emotion he had undergone were in the Prince's face, and when he spoke his voice was tremulous.

"Son of Jahdai," he said, standing, "I had once a wife and child. They perished–how and when, I cannot trust myself to tell. I have been faithful to their memory. From the day I lost them, I have gone up and down the world hunting for many things which I imagined might renew the happiness I had from them. I have been prodigal of gratitude, admiration, friendship, and goodwill, and bestowed them singly and together, and often; but never have I been without consciousness of something else demanding to be given. Happiness is not all in receiving. I passed on a long time before it came to me that we are rich in affections not intended for hoarding, and that no one can be truly content without at least one object on which to lavish them. Here"—and he laid his hand on the child's head—"here is mine, found at last."

"Lael is a good girl," Uel said with pride.

"Yes, and as thou lovest her let me love her," the Prince responded. Then, seeing Uel become serious, he added, "To help thee to my meaning, Lael was my child's name, and she was the image of this one; and as she died

when fourteen, thy Lael's age, it is to me as if the tomb had miraculously rendered its victim back to me."

"Prince," said Uel, "had I thought she would not be agreeable to you, I should have been sorry."

"Understand, son of Jahdai," the other interposed, "I seek more of thee than thy permission to love her. I want to do by her as though she were mine naturally."

"You would not take her from me?"

"No. That would leave thee bereft as I have been. Like me, thou wouldst then go up and down looking for some one to take her place in thy heart. Be thou her father still; only let me help thee fashion her future."

"Her birthrights are humble," the shopkeeper answered, doubtfully; for while in his secret heart he was flattered, his paternal feeling started a scruple hard to distinguish from fear.

A light shone brightly in the eyes of the elder Jew, and his head arose.

"Humble!" he said. "She is a daughter of Israel, an inheritor of the favor of the Lord God, to whom all things are possible. He keeps the destinies of his people. He—not thou or I—knows to what this little one may come. As we love her, let us hope the happiest and the highest, and prepare her for it. To this end it were best you allow her to come to me as to another father. I who teach the deaf and dumb to speak—Syama and Nilo the elder—will make her a scholar such as does not often grace a palace. She shall speak the Mediterranean tongues. There shall be no mysteries of India unknown to her. Mathematics shall bring the heavens to her feet. Especially shall she become wise in the Chronicles of God. At the same time, lest she be educated into unfitness for the present conditions of life, and be unsexed, thou shalt find a woman familiar with society, and instal her in thy house as governess and example. If the woman be also of Israel, so much the better; for then we may expect faithfulness without jealousy. And further, son of Jahdai, be niggardly in nothing concerning our Lael. Clothe her as she were the King's daughter. At going abroad, which she shall do with me in the street and on the water, I would have her sparkle with jewels, the

observed of everybody, even the Emperor. And ask not doubtingly, 'Whence the money for all this?' I will find it. What sayest thou now?"

Uel did not hesitate.

"O Prince, as thou dost these things for her—so far beyond the best I can dream of—take her for thine, not less than mine."

With a beaming countenance, the elder raised the child, and kissed her on the forehead.

"Dost hear?" he said to her. "Now art thou my daughter."

She put her arms about his neck, then held them out to Uel, who took her, and kissed her, saying:

"Oh my Gul Bahar!"

"Good!" cried the Prince. "I accept the name. To distinguish the living from the dead, I too will call her my Gul Bahar."

Thereupon the men sat, and arranged the new relation, omitting nothing possible of anticipation.

Next day the Prince's house was opened with every privilege to the child. A little later on a woman of courtly accomplishment was found and established under Uel's roof as governess. Thereupon the Mystic entered upon a season during which he forgot the judgment upon him, and all else save Gul Bahar, and the scheme he brought from Cipango. He was for the time as other men. In the lavishment of his love, richer of its long accumulation, he was faithful to his duty of teacher, and was amply rewarded by her progress in study.

BOOK III

THE PRINCESS IRENE

CHAPTER I

MORNING ON THE BOSPHORUS

Our narrative proceeds now from a day in the third year after Lael, the daughter of the son of Jahdai, dropped into the life of the Prince of India—a day in the vernal freshness of June.

From a low perch above the mountain behind Becos, the sun is delivering the opposite European shore of the Bosphorus from the lingering shades of night. Out on the bosom of the classic channel vessels are swinging lazily at their anchorages. The masthead of each displays a flag bespeaking the nationality of the owner; here a Venetian, there a Genoese, yonder a Byzantine. Tremulous flares of mist, rising around the dark hulls, become entangled in the cordage, and as if there were no other escape, resolve themselves into air. Fisher boats are bringing their owners home from night–work over in the shallows of Indjerkeui. Gulls and cormorants in contentious flocks, drive hither and thither, turning and tacking as the schools of small fish they are following turn and tack down in the warm blue–green depths to which they are native. The many wings, in quick eccentric motion, give sparkling life to the empurpled distance.

The bay of Therapia, on the same European shore over against Becos, was not omitted from rescue by the sun. Within its lines this morning the ships were in greater number than out in the channel—ships of all grades, from the sea going commercial galley to the pleasure shallop which, if not the modern *caique*, was at least its ante–type in lightness and grace.

And as to the town, one had but to look at it to be sure it had undergone no recent change—that in the day of Constantine Dragases it was the same summer resort it had been in the day of Medea the sorceress—the same it yet is under sway of the benignant Abdul–Hamid.

From the lower point northwardly jutting finger–like into the current of the channel, the beach swept in a graceful curve around to the base of the

promontory on the south. Then as now children amused themselves gathering the white and black pebbles with which it was strewn, and danced in and out with the friendly foam–capped waves. Then as now the houses seemed tied to the face of the hill one above another in streetless disarrangement; insomuch that the stranger viewing them from his boat below shuddered thinking of the wild play which would ensue did an earthquake shake the hill ever so lightly.

And then as now the promontory south served the bay as a partial land–lock. Then as now it arose boldly a half mountain densely verdurous, leaving barely space enough for a roadway around its base. Then as now a descending terrace of easy grade and lined with rock pine trees of broadest umbrella tops, slashed its whole townward front. Sometime in the post–Medean period a sharp–eyed Greek discerned the advantages it offered for aesthetic purposes, and availed himself of them; so that in the age of our story its summit was tastefully embellished with water basins, white–roofed pavilions, and tessellated pavements Roman style. Alas, for the perishability of things human! And twice alas, that the beautiful should ever be the most perishable!

But it is now to be said we have spoken thus of the Bosphorus, and the bay and town of Therapia, and the high promontory, as accessories merely to a plot of ground under the promontory and linked to it by the descending terrace. There is no word fitly descriptive of the place. Ravine implies narrowness; gorge signifies depth; valley means width; dell is too toylike. A summer retreat more delicious could not be imagined. Except at noon the sun did but barely glance into it. Extending hundreds of yards back from the bay toward the highlands west of the town, it was a perfected garden of roses and flowering vines and shrubs, with avenues of boxwood and acacias leading up to ample reservoirs hidden away in a grove of beeches. The water flowing thence became brooks or was diverted to enliven fountains. One pipe carried it in generous flow to the summit of the promontory. In this leafy Eden the birds of the climate made their home the year round. There the migratory nightingale came earliest and lingered longest, singing in the day as well as in the night. There one went regaled with the breath of roses commingled with that of the jasmine.

There the bloom of the pomegranate flashed through the ordered thicket like red stars; there the luscious fig, ripening in its "beggar's jacket," offered itself for the plucking; there the murmur of the brooks was always in the listening ear.

Along the whole front of the garden, so perfectly a poet's ideal, stretched a landing defended from the incessant swash of the bay by a stone revetment. There was then a pavement of smoothly laid flags, and then a higher wall of dark rubble–work, coped with bevelled slabs. An open pavilion, with a bell–fashioned dome on slender pillars, all of wood red painted, gave admission to the garden. Then a roadway of gray pebbles and flesh–tinted shells invited a visitor, whether afoot or on horseback, through clumps of acacias undergrown with carefully tended rosebushes, to a palace, which was to the garden what the central jewel is to the cluster of stones on "my lady's" ring.

Standing on a tumulus, a little removed from the foot of the promontory, the palace could be seen from cornice to base by voyagers on the bay, a quadrangular pile of dressed marble one story in height, its front relieved by a portico of many pillars finished in the purest Corinthian style. A stranger needed only to look at it once, glittering in the sun, creamy white in the shade, to decide that its owner was of high rank—possibly a noble—possibly the Emperor himself.

It was the country palace of the Princess Irene, of whom we will now speak.**[14]**

CHAPTER II

THE PRINCESS IRENE[15]

During the reign of the last Manuel, in 1412, as a writer has placed the incident—that is to say, about thirty–nine years prior to the epoch occupying us—a naval battle occurred between the Turks and Christians off Plati, one of the Isles of the Princes. The issue was of interest to all the peoples who were in the habit of commercial resort in the region, to the Venetians and Genoese as well as the Byzantines. To the latter it was of most vital moment, since defeat would have brought them a serious interruption of communication with the islands which still remained to the Emperor and the powers in the West upon which their dependency grew as year after year their capacity for self–defence diminished.

The Turkish ships had been visible in the offing several days. At last the Emperor concluded to allow his mariners to go out and engage them. His indecision had been from a difficulty in naming a commander. The admiral proper was old and inexperienced, and his fighting impulses, admitting they had ever really existed, had been lost in the habitudes of courtierly life. He had become little more than a ceremonial marker. The need of the hour was a genuine sailor who could manoeuvre a squadron. On that score there was but one voice among the seamen and with the public—

"Manuel—give us Manuel!"

The cry, passing from the ships to the multitude in the city, assailed the palace.

The reader should understand the Manuel wanted was not the Emperor, but one of his brothers who could lay no claim to birth in the purple. His mother had not been a lawful spouse; yet the Manuel thus on the tongues of the many had made a hero of himself. He proved his temper and abilities in many successful affairs on the sea, and at length became a

popular idol; insomuch that the imperial jealousy descended upon him like a cloud, and hid him away. Nor could his admirers say he lived; he had a palace and a family, and it was not known that any of the monasteries in the city or on the Isles of the Princes had opened to receive him.

On these shreds of evidence, affirmative and negative, slender as they may appear, it was believed he was yet alive. Hence the clamor; and sooth to say it sufficed to produce the favorite; so at least the commonalty were pleased to think, though a sharper speculation would have scored the advent quite as much to the emergency then holding the Empire in its tightening grip.

Restored to active life, Manuel the sailor was given a reception in the Hippodrome; then after a moment of gladness with his family, and another in which he was informed of the situation and trial before him, he hurried to assume the command.

Next morning, with the rising of the sun, the squadron under oar and sail issued gallantly from its retreat in the Golden Horn, and in order of battle sought the boastful enemy of Plati. The struggle was long and desperate. Its circumstances were dimly under view from the seaward wall in the vicinity of the Seven Towers. A cry of rejoicing from the anxious people at last rose strong enough to shake the turrets massive as they were—"Kyrie Eleison! Kyrie Eleison!" Christ had made his cause victorious. His Cross was in the ascendant. The Turks drew out of the defeat as best they could, and made haste to beach the galleys remaining to them on the Asiatic shore behind the low–lying islands.

Manuel the sailor became more than a hero; to the vulgar he was a savior. All Byzantium and all Galata assembled on the walls and water along the famous harbor to welcome him when, with many prizes and a horde of prisoners, he sailed back under the sun newly risen over the redeemed Propontis. Trumpets answered trumpets in brazen cheer as he landed. A procession which was a reminder of the triumphs of the ancient and better times of the Empire escorted him to the Hippodrome. The overhanging gallery reserved for the Emperor there was crowded with the dignitaries of the court; the factions were out with their symbols of blue

and green; the scene was gorgeous; yet the public looked in vain for Manuel the Emperor; he alone was absent; and when the dispersion took place, the Byzantine spectators sought their homes shaking their heads and muttering of things in store for their idol worse than had yet befallen him. Wherefore there was little or no surprise when the unfortunate again disappeared, this time with his whole family. The victory, the ensuing triumph, and the too evident popularity were more than the jealous Emperor could overlook.

There was then a long lapse of years. John Palaeologus succeeded Manuel on the throne, and was in turn succeeded by Constantine, the last of the Byzantine monarchs.

Constantine signalized his advent, the great Greek event of 1448, by numerous acts of clemency, for he was a just man. He opened many prison doors long hopelessly shut. He conferred honors and rewards that had been remorselessly erased from account. He condoned offences against his predecessors, mercifully holding them wanting in evil against himself. So it came to pass that Manuel, the hero of the sea fight off Plati, attained a second release, or, in better speech, a second resurrection. He had been all the years practically buried in certain cells of the convent of St. Irene on the island of Prinkipo, and now he came forth an old man, blind and too enfeebled to walk. Borne into private audience, he was regarded by Constantine with tender sympathy.

"And thou art that Manuel who made the good fight at Plati?"

"Say rather I am he who was that Manuel," the ancient replied. "Death despises me now because he could not call my decease a victory."

The inquisitor, visibly affected, next spoke in an uncertain voice.

"Is what I have heard true, that at thy going into the Monastery thou hadst a family?"

The eyes of the unfortunate were not too far gone for tears; some rolled down his cheeks; others apparently dropped into his throat.

"I had a wife and three children. It is creditable to the feeling called love that they chose to share my fate. One only survives, and"—he paused as if

feebly aware of the incoherency—"and she was born a prisoner."

"Born a prisoner!" exclaimed Constantine. "Where is she now?"

"She ought to be here."

The old man turned as he spoke, and called out anxiously:

"Irene—Irene, where art thou, child?"

An attendant, moved like his master, explained.

"Your Majesty, his daughter is in the ante–room."

"Bring her here."

There was a painful hush in the chamber during the waiting. When the daughter appeared, all eyes were directed to her—all but the father's, and even he was instantly aware of her presence; for which, doubtless, the sensibility known only to the long–time blind was sufficiently alive.

"Where hast thou been?" he asked, with a show of petulance.

"Calm thee, father, I am here."

She took his hand to assure him, and then returned the look of the Emperor; only his was of open astonishment, while hers was self–possessed.

Two points were afterwards remembered against her by the courtiers present; first, contrary to the custom of Byzantine women, she wore no veil or other covering for the face; in the next place, she tendered no salutation to the Emperor. Far from prostrating herself, as immemorial etiquette required, she did not so much as kneel or bow her head. They, however, excused her, saying truly her days had been passed in the Monastery without opportunity to acquire courtly manners. In fact they did not at the time notice the omissions. She was so beautiful, and her beauty reposed so naturally in an air of grace, modesty, intelligence, and purity that they saw nothing else. Constantine recovered himself, and rising from his seat, advanced to the edge of the dais, which in such audiences, almost wholly without state, raised him slightly above his guests and attendants, and spoke to the father:

"I know thy history, most noble Greek—noble in blood, noble in loyalty, noble by virtue of what thou hast done for the Empire—and I honor thee. I grieve for the suffering thou hast endured, and wish myself surrounded with many more spirits like thine, for then, from my exalted place, I could view the future and its portents with greater calmness of expectation, if not with more of hope. Perhaps thou hast heard how sadly my inheritance has been weakened by enemies without and within; how, like limbs lopped from a stately tree, the themes**[16]** richest in their yield of revenue have been wrested from the body of our State, until scarce more than the capital remains. I make the allusion in apology and excuse for the meagreness of what I have to bestow for thy many heroic services. Wert thou in the prime of manhood, I would bring thee into the palace. That being impossible, I must confine myself to amends within my power. First, take thou liberty."

The sailor sunk to his knees; then he fell upon his hands, and touched the floor with his forehead. In that posture, he waited the further speech. Such was the prostration practised by the Greeks in formally saluting their Basileus.

Constantine proceeded.

"Take next the house here in the city which was thine when the judgment fell upon thee. It has been tenantless since, and may be in need of repairs; if so, report the cost they put thee to, and I will charge the amount to my civil list." Looking then at the daughter, he added: "On our Roumelian shore, up by Therapia, there is a summer house which once belonged to a learned Greek who was the happy possessor of a Homer written masterfully on stainless parchment. He had a saying that the book should be opened only in a palace specially built for it; and, being rich, he indulged the fancy. He brought the marble from the Pentelic quarries; nothing grosser was permitted in the construction. In the shade of a portico of many columns of Corinthian model he passed his days reading to chosen friends, and living as the Athenians were wont to live in the days of Pericles. In my youth I dwelt much with him, and he so loved me that at dying he gave me the house, and the gardens and groves around it. They will help me now to make partial amends for injustice done; and when will

a claimant appear with better right than the daughter of this brave man? In speaking but now, did he not call thee Irene?"

A flush overspread her neck and face, but she answered without other sign of feeling:

"Irene."

"The house—it may be called a palace—and all that pertains to it, are thine," he continued. "Go thither at will, and begin thy life anew."

She took one step forward, but stopped as suddenly, her color coming and going. Never had Constantine seen wife or maid more beautiful. He almost dreaded lest the spell she cast over him would be broken by the speech trembling upon her lips. She moved quickly to the dais then, and taking his hand, kissed it fervently, saying:

"Almost I believe we have a Christian Emperor."

She paused, retaining the hand, and looking up into his face.

The spectators, mostly dignitaries of high degree, with their attendants, were surprised. Some of them were shocked; for it should be remembered the court was the most rigidly ceremonial in the world. The rules governing it were the excerpt of an idea that the Basileus or Emperor was the incarnation of power and majesty. When spoken to by him, the proudest of his officials dropped their eyes to his embroidered slippers; when required to speak to him, they fell to their knees, and kept the posture till he was pleased to bid them rise. Not one of them had ever touched his fingers, except when he deigned to hold them out to be most humbly saluted. Their manner at such times was more than servility; in appearance, at least, it was worship. This explanation will enable the reader to understand the feeling with which they beheld the young woman keep the royal hand a prisoner in hers. Some of them shuddered and turned their faces not to witness a familiarity so closely resembling profanation.

Constantine, on his part, looked down into the eyes of his fair kinswoman, knowing her speech was not finished. The slight inclination of his person toward her was intended for encouragement. Indeed, he made no attempt to conceal the interest possessing him.

"The Empire may be shorn, even as thou hast said," she resumed presently, in a voice slightly raised. "But is not this city of our fathers by site and many advantages as much the capital of the world as ever? A Christian Emperor founded it, and his name was Constantine; may it not be its perfect restoration is reserved for another Constantine, also a Christian Emperor? Search thy heart, O my Lord! I have heard how noble impulses are often prophets without voices."

Constantine was impressed. From a young person, bred in what were really prison walls, the speech was amazing. He was pleased with the opinion she was evidently forming of himself; he was pleased with the hope she admitted touching the Empire; he was pleased with the Christian faith, the strength of mind, the character manifested. Her loyalty to the old Greek regime was unquestionable. The courtiers thought she might at least have made some acknowledgment of his princely kindness; but if he thought of the want of form, he passed it; enough for him that she was a lovely enthusiast. In the uncertainty of the moment, he hesitated; then, descending from the dais, he kissed her hand gracefully, courteously, reverently, and said simply:

"May thy hope be God's will."

Turning from her, he helped the blind man to his feet, and declared the audience dismissed.

Alone with his secretary, the Grand *Logothete*, he sat awhile musing.

"Give ear," he at length said. "Write it, a decree. Fifty thousand gold pieces annually for the maintenance of Manuel and Irene, his daughter."

The secretary at the first word became absorbed in studying his master's purple slippers; then, having a reply, he knelt.

"Speak," said Constantine.

"Your Majesty," the secretary responded, "there are not one thousand pieces in the treasury unappropriated."

"Are we indeed so poor?"

The Emperor sighed, but plucking spirit, went on bravely:

"It may be God has reserved for me the restoration, not only of this city, but of the Empire. I shall try to deserve the glory. And it may be that noble impulses *are* speechless prophets. Let the decree stand. Heaven willing, we will find a way to make it good."

CHAPTER III

THE HOMERIC PALACE

The reader is now informed of the history of Irene, which is to he remembered as of an important personage in the succeeding pages. Knowing also how she became possessed of the palace we have been at some pains to describe, he is prepared to see her at home.

The night has retreated from the European shore of the Bosphorus, although the morning is yet very young. The sun in the cloudless sky beyond Becos, where it appears standing as if to rest from the fatigue of climbing the hills, is lifting Therapia bodily out of its sparkling waters. In the bay moreover there are many calls of mariner to mariner, and much creaking of windlasses, and clashing of oars cast loose in their leather slings. To make the scene perfectly realistic there is a smell of breakfast cooking, not unpleasant to those within its waftage who are yet to have their appetites appeased. These sights, these sounds, these smells, none of them reach the palace in the garden under the promontory opposite the town. There the birds are singing their matin songs, the flowers loading the air with perfume, and vine and tree drinking the moisture borne down to them from the unresting sea so near in the north.**[17]**

Under the marble portico the mistress is sitting exactly in the place we can imagine the old Greek loved most what time he read from his masterful copy of Homer. Between columns she saw the Bosphorean expanse clear to the wooded Asiatic shore. Below was a portion of the garden through which the walk ran, with a graceful curve, to the red kiosk by the front gate. Just beyond it the landing lay. Around her were palm and rose trees in painted tubs, and in their midst, springing from a tall vase carven over with mythologic figures, a jasmine vine affected all the graces of its most delicate nature. Within reach of her right hand there were platters of burnished brass on a table of ebony, its thin, spider legs inlaid

with silver in lines. One of the platters bore a heap of white biscuits such as at this day are called crackers; the others supported pitchers, and some drinking cups, all of silver.

The mistress sat in an arm–chair very smooth in finish despite the lineations sunk into its surfaces, and so roomy as to permit her to drop easily into a half–reclining posture. A footstool dressed in dark stamped leather was ready to lend its aid to gracefulness and comfort.

We will presume now to introduce the reader to the Princess Irene, though, as the introduction must be in the way of description, our inability to render the subject adequately is admitted in advance.

At the moment of first sight, she is sitting erect, her head turned slightly to the left shoulder, and both hands resting on the dog's head garnishing the right arm of the chair. She is gazing abstractedly out at the landing, as if waiting for some one overdue. The face is uncovered; and it is to be said here that, abhorring the custom which bound her Byzantine sisterhood to veils, except when in the retiracy of their chambers, she was at all times brave enough to emphasize the abhorrence by discarding the encumbrance. She was never afraid of the effects of the sun on her complexion, and had the art of moving modestly and with composure among men, who, on their side, were used in meeting her to conceal their admiration and wonder under cover of grave respect.

Her figure, tall, slender, perfectly rounded, is clad in drapery of the purest classic mode. Outwardly it consists of but two garments—a robe of fine white woollen stuff, and over it a mantle of the same texture and hue, hanging from a yoke of close–fitting flesh–colored silk richly embroidered with Tyrian floss. A red rope loosely twisted girdles her body close under the breasts, from which, when she is standing, the gown in front falls to the feet, leaving a decided train. The mantle begins at a point just in front of the arm, under which, and along the sides, it hangs, like a long open sleeve, being cut away behind about half down the figure. The contrivance of the yoke enabled the artist, by gathering the drapery, to determine the lines in which it should drop, and they were few but positive. In

movement, the train was to draw the gown to the form so its outlines could be easily followed from the girdle.

The hair, of the tint of old gold, is dressed in the Grecian style; and its abundance making the knot unusually ample, there was necessity for the two fillets of pink silk to keep it securely in place.

The real difficulty in the description is now reached. To a reader of sharp imagination it might be sufficient to say the face of the Princess Irene, seen the morning in question, was perfectly regular, the brows like pencilling, the nose delicate, the eyes of violet shading into blackness, the mouth small with deep corners and lips threads of scarlet, the cheeks and brow precisely as the received law of beauty would have them. This would authorize a conception of surpassing loveliness; and perhaps it were better did we stop with the suggestions given, since the fancy would then be left to do its own painting. But patience is besought, for vastly more than a face of unrivalled perfection, the conjuration is a woman who yet lives in history as such a combination of intellect, spirit, character, and personal charm that men, themselves rulers and conquerors, fell before her at sight. Under necessity therefore of going on with the description, what words are at command to convey an idea of the complexion—a property so wholly unartificial with her that the veins at the temples were as transparent shadows on snow, and the coloring of the cheeks like a wash of roses? What more is there than to point to the eyes of the healthful freshness peculiar to children of tender nurture; the teeth exquisitely regular and of the whiteness of milk and the lustre of pearls; the ears small, critically set, and tinted pink and white, like certain shells washed ashore last night? What more? Ah, yes! There are the arms bare from the shoulder, long and round as a woman's should be, and terminating in flexile wrists, and hands so gracefully modelled we shrink from thought of their doing more than making wreaths of flowers and playing with harp strings. There too is the pose of the head expressive of breeding and delicacy of thought and feeling, of pride and courage—the pose unattainable by effort or affectation, and impossible except where the head, itself faultless, is complemented by a neck long, slender, yet round, pliant, always graceful, and set upon shoulders the despair of every one but the master who found

perfection of form and finish in the lilies of the Madonna. Finally there is the correspondence, in action as well as repose, of body, limbs, head, and face, to which, under inspiration of the soul, the air and manner of lovely women are always referable.

The Princess was yet intensely observing the stretch of water before her, and the rapid changes of the light upon its face, when a boat, driven by a single oarsman, drew up to the landing, and disembarked a passenger. That he was not the person she was expecting became instantly apparent. She glanced at him once, and then, satisfied he was a stranger in whom she had no interest, resumed study of the bay. He, however, after dropping something in the boatman's hand, turned, and walked to the gateway, and through it towards the palace.

Ere long a servant, whose very venerable appearance belied the steel–pointed javelin he carried, hobbled slowly along the floor of the portico marshalling a visitor. She touched the golden knot at the back of her head to be assured of its arrangement, arose, shook out the folds of her gown and mantle, and was prepared for the interruption.

The costume of the stranger was new to the Princess. A cassock of mixed white and brown wool that had gone through a primitive loom with little of any curative process except washing, hung from his neck to his heels. Aside from the coarseness of warp and woof, it fitted so closely that but for a slit on each side of the skirt walking would have been seriously impeded. The sleeves were long and loose, and covered the hands. From the girdle of untanned skin a double string of black horn beads, each large as a walnut, dropped to his knees. The buckle of the girdle, which might have been silver deeply oxidized, was conspicuously large, and of the rudest workmanship. But withal much the most curious part of the garb was the cowl, if such it may be called. Projecting over the face so far as to cast the features in shadow, it carried on the sides of the head broad flaps, not unlike the ears of an elephant. This envelope was hideous, yet it served to exalt the man within to giantesque proportions.

The Princess surveyed the visitor with astonishment hardly concealed. What part of the world could produce a creature so utterly barbarous?

What business could he have with her? Was he young or old? Twice she scanned him from head to foot. He was a monk; so much the costume certified; and while he stopped before her with one foot advanced from the edge of the skirt, and resting lightly in the clasp of the thongs of a very old–fashioned sandal, she saw it was white, and blue veined, and at the edges pink, like a child's, and she said to herself, "He is young—a young monastic."

The stranger drew from his girdle a linen package carefully folded, kissed it reverently, and said:

"Would the Princess Irene be pleased if I open the favor for her?"

The voice was manly, the manner deferential.

"Is it a letter?" she asked.

"A letter from the Holy Father, the Archimandrite of the greatest of the northern Lavras."**[18]**

"Its name?"

"Bielo–Osero."

"The Bielo–Osero? Where is it?"

"In the country of the Great Prince."**[19]**

"I knew not that I had an acquaintance in so distant a region as the north of Russia. You may open the letter."

Unmindful of the indifferent air of the Princess, the monk removed the cloth, leaving its folds hanging loosely from his hand. A sheet of vellum was exposed lying on the covered palm.

"The Holy Father bade me when I delivered the writing, O Princess, to deliver his blessing also; which—the saying is mine, not his—is of more worth to the soul than a coffer of gold for the wants of the body."

The pious comment was not lost; but without a word, she took the vellum, and resuming her seat, addressed herself to the reading. First, her eyes dropped to the signature. There was a look of surprise—another of uncertainty—then an exclamation:

"Hilarion! Not my Father Hilarion! He is but a sacred memory! He went away and died—and yet this is his hand. I know it as I know my own."

The monk essayed to remove the doubt.

"Permit me," he said, then asked, "Is there not an island hereabouts called Prinkipo?"

She gave him instant attention.

"And on the side of the island over against the Asiatic coast, under a hill named Kamares, is there not a convent built centuries ago by an Empress?"

"Irene," she interposed.

"Yes, Irene—and was not Father Hilarion for many years Abbot of the convent? Then, on account of his fame for learning and piety, did not the Patriarch exalt him to attendance on his own person as Doctor of the Gospels? Still later, was he not summoned to serve the Emperor in the capacity of Warden of the Purple Ink?"

"From whom have you all these things?" she asked.

"Excellent Princess, from whom could I have them save the good Father himself?"

"Thou art then his messenger?"

"It becomes me better to refer you to what he has there written."

So saying, the monk stepped backward, and stood a little way off in a respectful attitude. She raised the missive, and kissed the signature several times, exclaiming:

"Now hath God taken care of his own!"

Then she said to the monk, "Thou art indeed a messenger with good tidings."

And he, accepting the welcome, uncovered his head, by raising the hideous *klobouk*,**[20]** and letting it fall back pendant from his shoulders. The violet eyes of the Princess opened wider, brightening as with a sudden influx of light. She could not remember a finer head or a face more perfect in manly beauty, and at the same time so refined and gentle.

And he was so young—young even as herself—certainly not more than twenty. Such was her first general impression of him. For the pleasure there was in the surprise, she would not allow it to be observed, but said:

"The Father in his letter, no doubt, tells me thy name, but since I wish to reserve the reading, I hope thou wilt not be offended if I ask it directly."

"The name my mother gave me is Andre; but when I came to be a deacon in our Bielo–Osero, Father Hilarion, who presided at the raising, asked me how I wished to be known in the priesthood, and I answered him, Sergius. Andre was a good christening, and serves well to remind me of my dear mother; but Sergius is better, because at hearing it I am always reminded that by vows and solemn rites of ordination I am a servant of God."

"I will endeavor to remember thy preference," the Princess said; "but just now, good Sergius, it is of next importance to know if thou hast yet had breakfast?"

A smile helped his face to even more of pleasantness.

"No," he answered, "but I am used to fasting, and the great city is not more than two hours away."

She looked concerned.

"Thy patron Saint hath not deserted thee. Here is a table already set. He for whom I held it is long on the road; thou shalt take his place, and be not less welcome." To the old servant she added: "We have a guest, not an enemy, Lysander. Put up thy javelin, and bring a seat for him; then stand behind him, lest it happen one service of the cups be not enough."

Directly the two were at the table opposite each other.

CHAPTER IV

THE RUSSIAN MONK

Sergius took a glass of red wine from the old attendant, and said:

"I should like your permission, O Princess, to make a confession."

His manner was that of one unused to the society of women. He was conscious she was studying him, and spoke to divert her. As she was slow answering, he added: "That you may not think me disposed to abuse the acquaintance you honor me with, especially as you have not yet read the letter of the good Father Hilarion upon which I rely for your better regard, I ask the permission rather to show the degree of your kindness to me. It may interest you also to learn of the confirmation of a certain faith you are perhaps unwittingly lending a novice in the ways of the world."

She had been studying him, and her first impression was now confirmed. His head in shape and pose was a poet's; the long, wavy, flaxen hair, parted in the middle, left small space for the forehead, which was nevertheless broad and white, with high–arched, well–defined brows for base. The eyes were gray. In repose they had a dreamy introspectional expression. The mustache and beard, the first growth of youth spent entirely indoors, were as yet too light to shade any part of the face. The nose was not enough *retrousse* to be irregular. In brief, the monk was of the type now well known as Russian. Aside from height and apparent muscularity, he very nearly realized the Byzantine ideal of Christ as seen in the cartoons excellently preserved in a mosque of Stamboul not far from the gate anciently San Romain now *Top Kapoussi*.

The appearance of the young monk, so strikingly suggestive of the being most sacred in the estimation of the Princess, was at the moment less curious to her than a certain habit observable in him. The look of brightness attendant upon the thought he was putting into form would, when the utterance was through, suffer a lapse which, for want of strictly

definite words, may be described as a sombering of the eyes when they were widest open, a gazing beyond at something else than the opposite speaker; implying that the soul was become mysteriously occupied apart from the mind. The effect was as if she had before her two widely different characters making themselves present at the same time in one person. Unquestionably, though rarely, there is a duality of nature in men, by which, to put it extremely, a seeming incapable may be vastly capable, outward gentleness a mask for a spirit of Neronian violence, dulness a low–lying cloud surcharged with genius. What shall be done with such a nature? When may it be relied upon? Who shall ever come to really know it?

Occupied with the idea, the Princess heard but the conclusion of the monk's somewhat awkward apology, and she answered:

"The confession must be of something lighter than a sin. I will listen."

"A sin!" he exclaimed, with a blush. "Pardon me, O Princess. It was a trifle of which I spoke too seriously. I promise thou shalt take from it nothing worse than a laugh at my simplicity. See thou these things?"

He gave her a glance full of boyish humor, and from a breast pocket of his cassock drew a bag of coarse yellow silk; thrusting a hand into its mouth, he then brought out a number of square leathern chips stamped with sunken letters, and laid them on the table before her.

"This you must know is our money." The Princess examined the pieces, and said:

"I doubt if our tradesmen would accept them."

"They will not. I am a witness to the fact. Nevertheless they will carry a traveller, go he either way, from one end of our Great Prince's realm to the other. When I left the Lavra, setting out on my journey, Father Hilarion gave me the bag, saying, as he put it into my hand, 'Now upon coming to the port where the ship awaits thee, be sure to exchange the money with the merchants there for Byzantine gold; else, unless God come to thy aid, thou wilt be turned into a mendicant.' And so I fully meant to do; but when I reached the port, I found it a city large, and full of people and sights

wonderful to me, demanding to be seen. I forgot the injunction. Indeed I never thought of it until this morning."

Here he laughed at himself, proving he was not yet seriously alive to the consequences of his negligence. Presently he resumed:

"I landed only last night, and sick from the tossing of the sea, put up at an inn in the town yonder. I ordered breakfast, and, according to a custom of my people, offered to pay before tasting. The master of the house looked at my money, and told me to show him coin of gold; if not that, then copper or brass, or even iron, in pieces bearing the name of the Emperor. Being told I had only this, he bade me look elsewhere for breakfast. Now I had designed going to the great city to kiss the hand of the Patriarch, of whom I have always heard as the wisest of men, before coming to thee; but the strait I was in was hard. Could I expect better of the innkeepers there? I had a button of gold—a memorial of my entry into the Lavra. That day Father Hilarion blessed it three times; and it bore a cross upon its face which I thought might make it acceptable as if it were lettered with the name of Constantine. A boatman consented to take it for rowing me to thy landing. Behold! Thou hast my confession!"

His speech to this time had been in Greek singularly pure and fluent; now he hesitated, while his eyes, open to the full, sombered, as if from a field in the brain back of them a shadow was being cast through his face. When next he spoke it was in his native tongue.

The Princess observed her guest with increasing interest; for she was wholly unused to such artlessness in men. How could Father Hilarion have intrusted business of importance to an envoy so negligent? His confession, as he termed it, was an admission, neither more nor less, that he had no money of the country into which he was come. And further, how could the habit of lapsing in thought, or more simply, of passing abruptly from the present subject, be explained except on the theory of something to which he had so given himself it had become overmastering and all absorbent? This, she saw intuitively, would prove the key to the man; and she set about finding it out.

"Your Greek, good Sergius, is excellent; yet I did not understand the words with which you concluded."

"I beg pardon," he replied, with a change of countenance. "In my mother's tongue I repeated a saying of the Psalmist, which you shall have voice and look as Father Hilarion has given it to me oftener than I am days old." Then his voice lowered into a sweet intensity fitting the text: "'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.' Those were the words, Princess; and who shall say they do not comprehend all there is of religion?"

The answer was unexpected, the manner affecting; never had she heard conviction and faith more perfectly affirmed. More than a monk, the young man might be a preacher! And Father Hilarion might have grown wiser of his years! Perhaps he knew, though at a vast distance, that the need of the hour in Constantinople was not a new notable—a bishop or a legate—so much as a voice with power of persuasion to still the contentions with which her seven hills were then resounding. The idea, though a surmise, was strong enough to excite a desire to read the holy man's letter. She even reproached herself for not having done so.

"The worthy priest gave me the same saying in the same words," she said, rising, "and they lose nothing of their meaning by thy repetition. We may speak of them hereafter. For the present, to keep thee from breakfast were cruel. I will go and make terms with my conscience by reading what thou hast brought me from the Father. Help thyself freely as if thou wert the most favored of guests; or rather"—she paused to emphasize the meaning—"as though I had been bidden to prepare for thy coining. Should there be failure in anything before thee, scruple not to ask for more. Lysander will be at thy service. I may return presently."

The monk arose respectfully, and stood until she disappeared behind the vases and flowers, leaving in his memory a fadeless recollection of graciousness and beauty, which did not prevent him from immediately addressing himself as became a hungry traveller.

CHAPTER V

A VOICE FROM THE CLOISTER

While the Princess Irene traversed the portico, she repeated the words, The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want; and she could see how the negligent, moneyless monk, turned away at the inn, was provided for in his moment of need, and also that she was the chosen purveyor; if so, by whom chosen? The young man had intended calling on the Patriarch first; who brought him to her? The breakfast was set for an invited guest; what held him back, if not the power that led the stranger to her gate?

In saying now that one of the consequences of the religious passion characteristic of the day in the East—particularly in Constantinople—a passion so extreme as to induce the strongest minds to believe God, and the Son, and even the Holy Mother discernible in the most commonplace affairs—our hope is to save the Princess from misjudgment. Really the most independent and fearless of spirits, if now and then she fell into the habit of translating the natural into the supernatural, she is entitled to mercy, since few things are harder to escape than those of universal practice.

Through a doorway, chiselled top and jambs, she entered a spacious hall nude of furniture, though richly frescoed, and thence passed into a plain open, court coolly shaded, having in the centre a jet of water which arose and fell into a bowl of alabaster. The water overflowing the bowl was caught again in a circular basin which, besides the ornamental carving on the edge and outside, furnished an ample pool for the gold fish disporting in it.

In the court there were also a number of women, mostly young Greeks, sewing, knitting, and embroidering vestments. Upon her entrance they arose, let their work drop on the spotless white marble at their feet, and received her in respectful silence. Signing them to resume their labor, she

took a reserved chair by the fountain. The letter was in her hand, but a thought had the precedence.

Admitting she had been chosen to fulfil the saying quoted, was the call for the once only? When the monk went up to the city, was her ministry to end? Would not that be a half–performance? How much farther should she go? She felt a little pang of trouble, due to the uncertainty that beset her, but quieted it by an appeal to the letter. Crossing herself, and again kissing the signature, she began the reading, which, as the hand was familiar to her, and the composition in the most faultless Greek of the period, was in nowise a perplexity.

"BIELO–OSERO, 3*d June*, 1452."

"From Hilarion, the Hegumen, to Irene, his well–beloved daughter."

"Thou hast thought of me this longtime as at rest forever—at rest with the Redeemer. While there is nothing so the equivalent of death as silence, there is no happiness so sweet as that which springs upon us unexpectedly. In the same sense the resurrection was the perfect complement of the crucifixion. More than all else, more than the sermon on the mount, more than His miracles, more than His unexampled life, it lifted our Lord above the repute of a mere philosopher like Socrates. We have tears for His much suffering; but we sing as Miriam sang when we think of His victory over the grave. I would not compare myself to Him; yet it pleases me believing these lines, so unexpected, will give thee a taste of the feeling the Marys had, when, with their spices in hand, they sought the sepulchre and found only the Angels there."

"Let me tell thee first of my disappearance from Constantinople. I repented greatly my taking from the old convent by the Patriarch; partly because it separated me from thee at a time when thy mind was opening to receive the truth and understand it. Yet the call had a sound as if from God. I feared to disobey it."

"Then came the summons of the Emperor. He had heard of my life, and, as a counteraction of vice, he wanted its example in the palace. I held back. But the Patriarch prevailed on me, and I went up and suffered myself to be installed Keeper of the Purple Ink. Then indeed I became miserable.

To such as I, what is sitting near the throne? What is power when not an instrument of mercy, justice and charity? What is easy life, except walking in danger of habits enervating to the hope of salvation? Oh, the miseries I witnessed! And how wretched the sight of them, knowing they were beyond my help! I saw moreover the wickedness of the court. Did I speak, who listened except to revile me? Went I to celebrations in this or that church, I beheld only hypocrisy in scarlet. How often, knowing the sin–stains upon the hands of the celebrants at the altar in Sta. Sophia, the house in holiness next to the temple of Solomon—how often, seeing those hands raise the blood of Christ in the cup before the altar, have I trembled, and looked for the dome above to let consuming vengeance in upon us, the innocent with the guilty!"

"At last fear filled all my thoughts, and forbade sleep or any comfort. I felt I must go, and quickly, or be lost for denial of covenants made with Him, the ultimate Judge, in whose approval there is the peace that passeth understanding. I was like one pursued by a spirit making its presence known to me in sobs and plaints, stinging as conscience stings."

"Consent to my departure was not to be expected; for great men dislike to have their favors slighted. It was not less clear that formal resignation of the official honor I was supposed to be enjoying would be serviceable to the courtiers who were not so much my enemies personally as they were enemies of religion and contemners of all holy observances. And there were so many of them! Alas, for the admission! What then was left but flight?"

"Whither? I thought first of Jerusalem; but who without abasement can inhabit with infidels? Then Hagion Oras, the Holy Hill, occurred to me; the same argument applied against it as against return to the convent of Irene–I would be in reach of the Emperor's displeasure. One can study his own heart. Holding mine off, and looking at it alive with desires holy and unholy, I detected in it a yearning for hermitage. How beautiful solitude appears! In what condition can one wishing to change his nature for the better more certainly attain the end than without companionship except of God always present? The spirit of prayer is a delicate minister; where can

we find purer nourishment for it than in the silence which at noon is deep as at midnight?"

"In this mood the story of the Russian St. Sergius reverted to me. He was born at Rostoff. Filled with pious impulses more than dissatisfied with the world, of which he knew nothing, with a brother, he left his father's house when yet a youth and betook himself to a great woods in the region Radenego; there he dwelt among savage beasts and wild men, fasting and praying and dependent like Elijah of old. His life became a notoriety. Others drew to him. With his own hands he built a wooden church for his disciples, giving it the name of Troitza or Thrice Holy Trinity. Thither I wandered in thought. A call might be there for me, so weary of the egotism, envy, detraction, greed, grind and battle of the soulless artificiality called society."

"I left Blacherne in the night, and crossing the sea in the north—no wonder it is so terrible to the poor mariner who has to hunt his daily bread upon its treacherous waves—I indulged no wait until, in the stone church of the Holy Trinity, I knelt before the remains of the revered Russian hermit, and thanked God for deliverance and freedom."

"The Troitza was no longer the simple wooden church of its founder. I found it a collection of monasteries. The solitude of my dreams was to be sought northward further. Some years before, a disciple of Sergius—Cyrill by name, since canonized—unterrified by winters which dragged through three quarters of the year, wandered off to a secluded place on the shore of the White Lake, where he dwelt until, in old age, a holy house was required to accommodate his following. He called it Bielo–Osero. There I installed myself, won by the warmth of my welcome."

"Now when I departed from Blacherne, I took with me, besides the raiment I wore, two pieces of property; a copy of the Rule of the Studium Monastery, and a *panagia* given me by the Patriarch—a medallion portrait of the Blessed Mother of our Lord the Saviour, framed in gold, and set in brilliants. I carry it hanging from my neck. Even in sleep it is always lying just above my heart. The day is not far now when my need of it will be over; then I will send it to thee in notice that I am indeed at rest, and that

in dying I wished to lend thee a preservative against ills of the soul and fear of death."

"The Rule was acceptable to the Brotherhood. They adopted it, and its letter and spirit prevailing, the house came in time to be odorous for sanctity. Eventually, though against my will, they raised me their Hegumen. And so my story reaches its end. May it find thee enjoying the delight of the soul's rest I have been enjoying without interruption since I began life anew in this retreat, where the days are days of prayer, and the nights illuminated by visions of Paradise and Heaven."

"In the next place, I pray thou wilt take the young brother by whom this will be delivered into friendly care. I myself raised him to a deaconship of our Monastery. His priestly name is Sergius. He was scarcely out of boyhood when I came here; it was not long, however, before I discovered in him the qualities which drew me to thee during thy prison life at the old convent of Irene—a receptive mind, and a native proneness to love God. I made his way easy. I became his teacher, as I had been thine; and as the years flew by he reminded me more and more of thee, not merely with respect to mental capacity, but purity of soul and aspiration as well. Need I say how natural it was for me to love him? Had I not just come from loving thee?"

"The brethren are good men, though unmannerly, and for the most part the Word reaches them from some other's tongue. Filling the lad's mind was like filling a lamp with oil. How precious the light it would one day shed abroad! And how much darkness there was for it to dispel! And in the darkness—Mercy, Mercy! How many are in danger of perishing!"

"Never did I think myself so clearly a servant of God as in the time Sergius was under my instruction. Thou, alas! being a woman, wert like a strong–winged bird doomed at best to a narrow cage. The whole world was before him."

"Of the many notes I have been compelled to take of the wants of religion in this our age, none so amazes me as the lack of preachers. We have priests and monks. Their name is Legion. Who of them can be said to have been touched with the fire that fell upon the faithful of the original

twelve? Where among them is an Athanasius? Or a Chrysostom? Or an Augustine? Slowly, yet apace with his growth, I became ambitious for the young man. He showed quickness and astonishing courage. No task appalled him. He mastered the tongues of the nationalities represented around him as if he were born to them. He took in memory the Gospels, the Psalms, and the prophetic books of the Bible. He replies to me in Greek undistinguishable from mine. I began to dream of him a preacher like St. Paul. I have heard him talking in the stone chapel, when the sleet–ridden winds without had filled it with numbing frost, and seen the Brotherhood rise from their knees, and shout, and sing, and wrestle like madmen. It is not merely words, and ideas, and oratorical manner, but all of them, and more—when aroused, he has the faculty of pouring out his spirit, so that what he says takes hold of a hearer, making him calm if in a passion, and excited if in a calm. The willing listen to him from delight, the unwilling and opposite minded because he enchains them."

"The pearl seemed to me of great price. I tried to keep it free of the dust of the world. With such skill as I possess, I have worn its stains and roughnesses away, and added to its lustre. Now it goes from me."

"You must not think because I fled to this corner of the earth, there is any abatement of my affection for Constantinople; on the contrary, absence has redoubled the love for it with which I was born. Is it not still the capital of our holy religion? Occasionally a traveller comes this way with news of the changes it has endured. Thus one came and reported the death of the Emperor John, and the succession of Constantine; another told of justice finally done thy heroic father, and of thy prosperity; more lately a wandering monk, seeking solitude for his soul's sake, joined our community, and from him I hear that the old controversy with the Latins has broken out anew, and more hotly than ever; that the new Emperor is an *azymite*, and disposed to adhere to the compact of union of the churches east and west made with the Pope of Rome by his predecessor, leaving heart–blisters burning as those which divided the Jews. Indeed, I much fear the likeness may prove absolute. It certainly will when the Turk appears before our holy city as Titus before Jerusalem."

"This latest intelligence induced me at last to yield to Sergius' entreaties to go down to Constantinople, and finish there the courses begun here. It is true he who would move the world must go into the world; at the same time I confess my own great desire to be kept informed of the progress of the discussion between the churches had much to do with my consent to his departure. He has instructions to that effect, and will obey them. Therefore I pray thee receive him kindly for his own sake, for mine, and the promise of good in him to the cause of Jesus, our beloved Master."

"In conclusion, allow me, daughter—for such thou wert to thy father, to thy mother, and to me—allow me to recur to circumstances which, after calm review, I pronounce the most interesting, the most delightful, the most cherished of my life."

"The house under the Kameses hill at Prinkipo was a convent or refuge for women rather than men; yet I was ordered thither when thy father was consigned to it after his victory over the Turks. I was then comparatively young, but still recollect the day he passed the gate going in with his family. Thenceforward, until the Patriarch took me away, I was his confessor."

"Death is always shocking. I remember its visits to the convent while I was of its people; but when it came and took thy sisters we were doubly grieved. As if the ungrateful Emperor could not be sufficiently cruel, it seemed Heaven must needs help him. The cloud of those sad events overhung the community a long time; at length there was a burst of sunshine. One came to my cell and said, 'Come, rejoice with us—a baby is born in the house.' Thou wert the baby; and thy appearance was the first of the great gladnesses to which I have referred."

"And not less distinctly I live over the hour we met in the chapel to christen thee. The Bishop was the chief celebrant; but not even the splendor of his canonicals—the cope with the little bells sewn down the sides and along the sleeves, the ompharium, the *panagia*, the cross, the crozier—were enough to draw my eyes from the dimpled pink face half–hidden in the pillow of down on which they held thee up before the font. And now the Bishop dipped his fingers in the holy water—'By what name

is this daughter to be known?' And I answered, 'Irene.' Thy parents had been casting about for a name. 'Why not call her after the convent?' I asked. They accepted the suggestion; and when I gave it out that great day—to the convent it was holiday—it seemed a door in my heart of which I was unknowing opened of itself, and took thee into a love–lined chamber to be sweet lady at home forever. Such was the second of my greatest happinesses."

"And then afterwhile thy father gave thee over to me to be educated. I made thy first alphabet, illuminating each letter with my own hand. Dost thou remember the earliest sentence I heard thee read? Or, if ever thou dost think of it now, be reminded it was thy first lesson in writing and thy first in religion—'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.' And thence what delight I found in helping thee each day a little further on in knowledge until at length we came to where thou couldst do independent thinking."

"It was in Sta. Sophia—in my memory not more than an occurrence of yesterday. Thou and I had gone from the island up to the holy house, where we were spectators of a service at which the Emperor, as Basileus, and the Patriarch were celebrants. The gold on cope and ompharium cast the space about the altar into a splendor rich as sunshine. Then thou asked me, 'Did Christ and His Disciples worship in a house like this? And were they dressed as these are?' I was afraid of those around us, and told thee to use eye and ear, but the time for questions and answers would be when we were back safely in the old convent."

"When we were there, thou didst renew the questions, and I did not withhold the truth. I told thee of the lowliness and simple ways of Jesus—how He was clothed—how the out–doors was temple sufficient for Him. I told thee of His preaching to the multitude on the shore of the Galilean sea—I told of His praying in the garden of Gethsemane—I told of the attempt to make a King of Him whether He would or not, and how He escaped from the people—of how He set no store by money or property, titles, or worldly honors."

"Then thou didst ask, 'Who made worship so formal?' And again I answered truthfully, there was no Church until after the death of our Lord; that in course of two hundred years kings, governors, nobles and the great of the earth were converted to the faith, and took it under their protection; that then, to conform it to their tastes and dignity, they borrowed altars from pagans, and recast the worship so sumptuously in purple and gold the Apostles would not have recognized it. Then, in brief, I began telling thee of the Primitive Church of Christ, now disowned, forgotten or lost in the humanism of religious pride."

"Oh, the satisfaction and happiness in that teaching! At each lesson it seemed I was taking thee closer to the dear Christ from whom the world is every year making new roads to get further away—the dear Christ in search of whom I plunged into this solitude."

"How is it with thee now, my daughter? Dost thou still adhere to the Primitive Church? Do not fear to speak thy mind to Sergius. He too is in the secret of our faith, believing it best to love our Lord from what our Lord hath Himself said."

"Now I bring this letter to a close. Let me have reply by Sergius, who, when he has seen Constantinople, will come back to me, unless He who holds every man's future in keeping discovers for him a special use."

"Do not forget me in thy prayers."

"Blessings on thee! HILARION."

The Princess read the letter a second time. When she came to the passage referring to the Primitive Church, her hands dropped into her lap, and she thought:

"The Father planted right well—better than he was aware, as he himself would say did he know my standing now."

A glow which might have been variously taken for half–serious, half–mocking defiance shone in her eyes as the thought ran on:

"Ay, dear man! Did he know that for asserting the Primitive Church as he taught it to me in the old convent, the Greeks and the Latins have alike adjudged me a heretic; that nothing saves me from the lions of the

Cynegion, except my being a woman—a woman forever offending by going when and where I wist with my face bare, and therefore harmless except to myself. If he knew this, would he send me his blessing? He little imagined—he who kept his opinion to himself because he could see no good possible from its proclamation—that I, the prison–bred girl he so loved, and whom he helped make extreme in courage as in conviction, would one day forget my sex and condition, and protest with the vehemence of a man against the religious madness into which the Christian world is being swept. Oh, that I were a man!"

Folding the letter hastily, she arose to return to her guest. There was fixedness of purpose in her face.

"Oh, that I were a man!" she repeated, while passing the frescoed hall on the way out.

In the portico, with the white light of the marble whitening her whole person, and just as the monk, tall, strong, noble looking, despite the grotesqueness of his attire, was rising from the table, she stopped, and clasped her hands.

"I have been heard!" she thought, trembling. "That which it refused to make me, Heaven has sent me. Here is a man! And he is certified as of my faith, and has the voice, the learning, the zeal and courage, the passion of truth to challenge a hearing anywhere. Welcome Sergius! In want thou camest; in want thou didst find me. The Lord *is* shepherd unto us both."

She went to him confidently, and offered her hand. Her manner was irresistible; he had no choice but to yield to it.

"Thou art not a stranger, but Sergius, my brother. Father Hilarion has explained everything."

He kissed her hand, and replied:

"I was overbold, Princess; but I knew the Father would report me kindly; and I was hungry."

"It is my part now to see the affliction comes not back again. So much has the Shepherd already determined. But, speaking as thy sister, Sergius, thy garments appear strange. Doubtless they were well enough in the

Bielo–Osero, where the Rule of the Studium is law instead of fashion; but here we must consult customs or be laughed at, which would be fatal to the role I have in mind for thee." Then with a smile, she added, "Observe the dominion I have already assumed."

He answered with a contented laugh: whereupon she went on, but more gravely:

"We have the world to talk over; but Lysander will now take you to your room, and you will rest until about mid–afternoon, when my boat will come to the landing to carry us to the city. The cowl you must exchange for a hat and veil, the sandals for shoes, the coarse cassock for a black gown; and, if we have time, I will go with you to the Patriarch."

Sergius followed Lysander submissively as a child.

CHAPTER VI

WHAT DO THE STARS SAY?

The sun which relieved the bay of Therapia from the thraldom of night did the same service for the Golden Horn; only, with a more potential voice, it seemed to say to the cities which were the pride of the latter, Awake! Arise! And presently they were astir indoor and out.

Of all the souls who, obedient to the early summons, poured into the street, and by the south window of the study of the Prince of India, some going this direction, some that, yet each intent upon a particular purpose, not one gave a thought to the Prince, or so much as wondered if he were awake. And the indifference of the many was well for him; it gave him immunity to pursue his specialty. But as we, the writer and the reader, are not of the many, and have an interest in the man from knowing more about him than they, what would have been intrusion in them may be excused in us.

Exactly at midnight the Prince, aroused by Syama, had gone to the roof, where there was a table, with a lamp upon it which he could shade at pleasure, an hour–glass, and writing materials. An easy chair was also set for him.

The view of the city offered for his inspection was circumscribed by the night. The famous places conspicuous in daytime might as well have been folded up and put away in a closet; he could not see so much as a glimmer of light from any of them. Pleased thereby, and arguing that even the wicked are good when asleep, he swept the heavens with a glance so long and searching there could be no doubt of the purpose which had brought him forth.

Next, according to the habit of astrologers, he proceeded to divide the firmament into Angles and Houses, and taking seat by the table, arranged the lamp to suit him, started the hour–glass running, and drew a diagram

familiar to every adept in divinatory science—a diagram of the heavens with the Houses numbered from one to twelve inclusive.

In the Houses he then set the mystic symbols of the visible planets as they were at the moment in position, mindful not merely of the parallels, but of the degrees as well. Verifying the correctness of the diagram by a second survey of the mighty overarch more careful even than the first, he settled himself in the chair, saying complacently:

"Now, O Saturn, thou, the coldest and highest! Thy Houses are ready—come, and at least behold them. I wait the configurations."

Thereupon, perfectly at ease, he watched the stellar hosts while, to their own music, they marched past the Thrones of the Most High Planets unchallenged except by him.

Occasionally he sat up to reverse the hour–glass, though more frequently he made new diagrams, showing the changes in position of the several influential bodies relatively to each other and to the benefic or malific signs upon which so much of result depended; nor did his eyes once weary or his zeal flag.

Finally when the sun, yet under the horizon behind the heights of Scutari, began to flood the sky with a brilliance exceeding that of the bravest of the stars, he collected the drawings, extinguished the lamp, and descended to his study, but not to rest.

Immediately that the daylight was sufficient, he addressed himself to mathematical calculations which appeared exhaustive of every rule and branch of the disciplinary science. Hours flew by, and still he worked. He received Syama's call to breakfast; returning from the meal, always the simplest of the day with him, he resumed the problem. Either he was prodigiously intent on a scheme in mind, or he was occupying himself diligently in order to forget himself.

About noon he was interrupted.

"My father."

Recognizing the voice, he pushed the proofs of labor from him almost to the other side of the table, turned in his seat, and replied, his face suffused

with pleasure:

"Thou enemy to labor! Did not some one tell thee of what I have on hand, and how I am working to finish it in time to take the water with thee this afternoon? Answer, O my Gul–Bahar, more beautiful growing as the days multiply!"

The Lael of the son of Jahdai, the Gul–Bahar of the mysterious Prince, was much grown, and otherwise greatly changed since we saw her last. Each intervening year had in passing left her a benediction. She was now about sixteen, slight, and Jewish in eyes, hair, and complexion. The blood enriched her olive cheeks; the lips took a double freshness from health; the smile resting habitually on the oval face had a tale it was always telling of a nature confiding, happy, satisfied with its conditions, hopeful of the future, and unaware from any sad experience that life ever admitted of changes. Her beauty bore the marks of intelligence; her manner was not enough self–contained to be called courtly; yet it was easy, and carried its own certificate of culture; it yielded too much to natural affection to deserve the term dignified. One listening to her, and noticing the variableness of her mood, which in almost the same instant could pass from gay to serious without ever reaching an extreme, would pronounce her too timid for achievement outside the purely domestic; at the same time he would think she appeared lovable to the last degree, and might be capable of loving in equal measure.

She was dressed in Byzantine fashion. In crossing the street from her father's house, she had thrown a veil over her head, but it was now lying carelessly about her neck. The wooden sandals with blocks under them, like those yet worn by women in Levantine countries to raise them out of the dust and mud when abroad, had been shaken lightly from her feet at the top of the stairs. Perfectly at home, she advanced to the table, and put one of her bare arms around the old man's neck, regardless of the white locks it crushed close down, and replied:

"Thou flatterer! Do I not know beauty is altogether in the eye of the beholder, and that all persons do not see alike? Tell me why, knowing the work was to be done, you did not send for me to help you? Was it for

nothing you made me acquainted with figures until—I have your authority for the saying—I might have stood for professor of mathematics in the best of the Alexandrian schools? Do not shake your head at me—or"—

With the new idea all alight in her face, she ran around the table, and caught up one of the diagrams.

"Ah, it is as I thought, father! The work I love best, and can do best! Whose is the nativity? Not mine, I know; for I was born in the glad time when Venus ruled the year. Anael, her angel, held his wings over me against this very wry–faced, snow–chilled Saturn, whom I am so glad to see in the Seventh House, which is the House of Woe. Whose the nativity, I say?"

"Nay, child—pretty child, and wilful—you have a trick of getting my secrets from me. I sometimes think I am in thy hands no more than tawdry lace just washed and being wrung preparatory to hanging in the air from thy lattice. It is well for you to know there are some things out of your reach—for the time at least."

"That is saying you will tell me."

"Yes—some day."

"Then I will be patient."

Seeing him become thoughtful, and look abstractedly out of the window, she laid the diagram down, went back, and again put her arm around his neck.

"I did not come to interrupt you, father, but to learn two things, and run away."

"You begin like a rhetorician. What subdivisions lie under those two things? Speak!"

"Thank you," she replied, quickly. "First, Syama told me you were at some particular task, and I wanted to know if I could help you."

"Dear heart!" he said, tenderly.

"Next—and this is all—I did not want you to forget we are to go up the Bosphorus this afternoon—up to Therapia, and possibly to the sea."

"You wish to go?" he asked.

"I dreamt of it all night."

"Then we will; and to prove I did not forget, the boatmen have their orders already. We go to the landing directly after noon."

"Not too soon," she answered, laughing. "I have to dress, and make myself gorgeous as an empress. The day is soft and kind, and there will he many people on the water, where I am already known quite as well as here in the city as the daughter of the Prince of India."

He replied with an air of pride:

"Thou art good enough for an emperor."

"Then I may go and get ready."

She withdrew her arm, kissed him, and started to the door, but returned, with a troubled look.

"One thing more, father."

He was recovering his work, but stopped, and gave her ear.

"What is it?"

"You have said, good father, that as my studies were too confining, it would be well if I took the air every day in my sedan. So, sometimes with Syama, sometimes with Nilo, I had the men carry me along the wall in front of the Bucoleon. The view over the sea toward Mt. Ida is there very beautiful; and if I look to the landward side, right at my feet are the terraced gardens of the palace. Nowhere do the winds seem sweeter to me. For their more perfect enjoyment I have at moments alighted from the chair, and walked; always avoiding acquaintances new and old. The people appear to understand my preference, and respect it. Of late, however, one person—hardly a man—has followed me, and stopped near by when I stopped; he has even persisted in attempts to speak to me. To avoid him, I went to the Hippodrome yesterday, and taking seat in front of the small obelisks in that quarter, was delighted with the exhibition of the horsemen. Just when the entertainment was at its height, and most interesting, the person of whom I am speaking came and sat on the same bench with me. I arose at once. It is very annoying, father. What shall I do?"

The Prince did not answer immediately, and when he did, it was to ask, suggestively:

"You say he is young?"

"Yes."

"His dress?"

"He seems to be fond of high colors."

"You asked no question concerning him?"

"No. Whom could I ask?"

Again the Prince reflected. Outwardly he was unconcerned; yet his blood was more than warm—the blood of pride which, as every one knows, is easily started, and can go hissing hot. He did not wish her to think of the affair too much; therefore his air of indifference; nevertheless it awoke a new train of thought in him.

If one were to insult this second Lael of his love, what could he do? The idea of appeal to a magistrate was irritating. Were he to assume punishment of the insolence, from whom could he hope justice or sympathy—he, a stranger living a mysterious life?

He ran hastily over the resorts at first sight open to him. Nilo was an instrument always ready. A word would arouse the forces in that loyal but savage nature, and they were forces subject to cunning which never slept, never wearied, and was never in a hurry—a passionless cunning, like that of the Fedavies of the Old Man of the Mountain.

It may be thought the Prince was magnifying a fancied trouble; but the certainty that sorrow *must* overtake him for every indulgence of affection was a haunting shadow always attending the most trifling circumstance to set his imagination conjuring calamities. That at such times his first impulse was toward revenge is explicable; the old law, an eye for an eye, was part of his religion; and coupling it with personal pride which a thought could turn into consuming heat, how natural if, while the anticipation was doing its work, his study should be to make the revenge memorable!

Feeling he was not entirely helpless in the affair, he thought best to be patient awhile, and learn who was the offender; a conclusion followed by a resolution to send Uel with the girl next time she went to take the air.

"The young men of the city are uncontrolled by respect or veneration," he said, quietly. "The follies they commit are sometimes ludicrous. Better things are not to be looked for in a generation given to dress as a chief ambition. And then it may be, O my Gul–Bahar"—he kissed her as he uttered the endearment—"it may be he of whom you complain does not know who you are. A word may cure him of his bad manners. Do not appear to notice him. Have eyes for everything in the world but him; that is the virtuous woman's defence against vulgarity and insult under every circumstance. Go now, and make ready for the boat. Put on your gayest; forget not the last necklace I gave you—and the bracelets—and the girdle with the rubies. The water from the flying oars shall not outflash my little girl. There now—Of course we will go to the landing in our chairs."

When she disappeared down the stairs, he went back to his work.

CHAPTER VII

THE PRINCE OF INDIA MEETS CONSTANTINE

It is to be remembered now, as very material to our story, that the day the Prince of India resolved on the excursion up the Bosphorus with Lael the exquisite stretch of water separated the territorial possessions of the Greek Emperor and the Sultan of the Turks.

In 1355 the utmost of the once vast Roman dominions was "a corner of Thrace between the Propontis (Marmora) and the Black Sea, about fifty miles in length and thirty in breadth."**[21]**

When Constantine Dragases—he of whom we are writing—ascended the throne, the realm was even more diminished.

Galata, just across the Golden Horn, had become a Genoese stronghold.

Scutari, on the Asiatic shore almost *vis–a–vis* with Constantinople, was held by a Turkish garrison.

With small trouble the Sultan could have converted the pitiful margin between Galata and the Cyanean rocks on the Black Sea.

Once indeed he set siege to Constantinople, but was beaten off, it was said, by the Mother of God, who appeared upon the walls of the city, and in person took part in the combat. Thereafter he contented himself with a tribute from the Emperors Manuel and John Palaeologus.

The relations of the Christian and Moslem potentates being thus friendly, it can be seen how the Princess Irene could keep to her palace by Therapia and the Prince of India plan jaunts along the Bosphorus.

Still there is a point to be borne in mind. Ships under Christian flags seldom touched at a landing upon the Asiatic shore. Their captains preferred anchoring in the bays and close under the ivy–covered heights of Europe. This was not from detestation or religious intolerance; at bottom there was a doubt of the common honesty of the strong–handed Turk

amounting to fear. The air was rife with stories of his treachery. The fishermen in the markets harrowed the feelings of their timid customers with tales of surprises, captures, and abductions. Occasionally couriers rushed through the gates of Constantinople to report red banners in motion, and the sound of clarions and drums, signifying armies of Moslems gathering for mysterious purposes.

The Moslems, on their part, it is but fair to say, were possessed of the same doubts of the Christians, and had answers to accusations always ready. The surprises, captures, and abductions were the unlicensed savageries of brigands, of whom they never knew one not a Greek; while the music and flags belonged to the militia.

Six or seven miles above Scutari a small river, born in the adjacent highlands, runs merrily down to meet and mingle with the tideless Bosphorus. The water it yields is clear and fresh; whence the name of the stream, The Sweet Waters of Asia. On its south side there is a prairie–like stretch, narrow, but green and besprent with an orchard of sycamores old and gnarled, and now much frequented on Mohammedan Sundays by ladies of the harems, who contrive to make it very gay. No doubt the modest river, and the grass and great trees were just as attractive ages before the first Amurath, with an army at his heels, halted there for a night. From that time, however, it was banned by the Greeks; and for a reason.

On the north bank of the little river there was a fortress known as the White Castle. An irregular, many–angled pile of undressed stone heavily merloned on top, its remarkable feature was a tall donjon which a dingy white complexion made visible a great distance, despite its freckling of loopholes and apertures for machine artillery. Seeing its military importance, the Sultan left a garrison to hold it. He was also pleased to change its name to Acce–Chisar.

The blood–red flag on this donjon was, at the era engaging us, the disenchanter of the Greeks; insomuch that in passing the Sweet Waters of Asia they hugged the opposite shore of the Bosphorus, crossing themselves and muttering prayers often of irreligious compound. A stork

has a nest on the donjon now. As an apparition it is not nearly so suggestive as the turbaned sentinel who used to occupy its outlook.

The popular imagination located dungeons under the grim old Castle, whence, of the many Christian men and women immured there, it was said none ever came forth alive.

But for these things, whether true or false, the Prince of India cared little. He was not afraid of the Turks. If the Asiatic shore had been festooned with red flags from the City of the Blind down by the Isles of the Princes to the last of the gray fortresses overlooking the Symplegades, it would not have altered a plan of his jot or tittle. Enough that Lael wanted and needed an outing on the glorious Bosphorus.

Accordingly, shortly after noon two chairs were brought and set down in his house. That is to say, two upright boxes fixed centrally on poles, and differing in nowise from the sedans still the mode of carriage affected by ladies of Constantinople unless it might be in their richer appointments. Inside, all was silk, lace and cushions; outside, the inlaying of mother of pearl and vari–colored woods was suggestive of modern papier–mache. The entrance was by a door in the front. A window in the door, and lesser ones on the sides, afforded the inmate air and opportunity for speech. Not wanting to be seen, she had only to draw the curtains together. In this instance it must be said the decoration of the carriages had been carried to an extreme.

Soon as the chairs were set down in the house, the Prince and Lael descended the stairs. The latter was attired in a semi–Greek costume, very rich and becoming; to embroidery of gold, she added bracelets, and a necklace of large pearls strung between spheres of gold equally large. A coronet graced her head, and it was so bejewelled that in bright light it seemed some one was sprinkling her with an incessant shower of sparkles.

The two took their seats. The carriers, two to each litter, stalwart men, uniformly clad in loose white garments, raised the poles on their shoulders. Syama threw the door of the house open, and at a signal from the Prince the procession sallied into the street. The crowd, in expectant waiting there, received it in silent wonder.

It is due the truth to say now that the common eye was attracted by the appearance of Nilo as much as by the rarities wrought in the panelling of the carriages. He strode ten or twelve feet in advance of Lael who, in the place of honor, was completely under the Prince's observation. The negro's costume was of a King of Kash–Cush. The hair stood on end in stiff cues, sharply pointed, and held by a chain of silver medals; an immense ring of silver hung from the cartilage of his nose. The neck was defended by a gorget of leather bristling with the fangs and claws of tigers in alternating rows. A robe of scarlet cloth large enough to envelop the man was thrown behind the massive shoulders. The body, black as polished ebony, was naked to the waist, whence a white skirt fell to the knees. The arms and legs were adorned with bracelets and anklets of ivory, while the straps of the heavy sandals were bordered with snail–shells. On the left arm he bore a round shield of rhinoceros hide embossed in brass; in the right hand, a pointless lance. Towering high above the heads of the crowd which opened before him with alacrity, the admiration received by the Prince's ally and friend was but a well–deserved tribute.

"A tiger–hunter!" said one, to a friend at his elbow.

"I should call him king of the tiger–hunters," the friend replied.

"Only a Prince of India would carry such a pensioner with him," another remarked.

"What a man!" said a woman, half afraid.

"An infidel, no doubt," was the answer.

"It is not a Christian wish, I know," the first added; "still I should like to see him face a lion in the Cynegion."

"Ay, him they call Tamerlane, because he is shorn of two toes."

The Prince, casting a glance of scarce concealed contempt over the throng, sighed, as he muttered, "If now I could meet the Emperor!"

The exclamation was from his heart.

We have seen the idea which lured him to Mecca, and brought him to Constantinople. In the years since flown, it was held subordinate to his love of Lael—subordinate merely. Latterly it had revived with much of its

original force, and he was now for the first time seriously scheming for an interview with the Emperor. No doubt a formal request would have secured the honor; but it was in his view better policy to be sought than seek, and with all his wealth, there was nothing he could so well afford to pay for success as time. In his study, he was continually saying to himself:

"It cannot be that the extravagances to which I am going will fail. He will hear of me, or we may meet—then the invitation!—And then I will propose the Brotherhood—God help me! But it is for him to invite me. Patience, O my soul!"

Extravagances!

The exclamation helps us to an understanding of the style he was carrying before the public—the silvering on his own black velvet robe, the jewels in Lael's coronet bursting with light, the gorgeous finish of the sedans, the barbaric costuming of Nilo. They were not significant of his taste. Except for what they might bring him, he did not care for jewels. And as for Lael, he would have loved her for her name's sake, and her honest, untarnished Jewish blood. Let us believe so at least until we find otherwise.

Nilo, by this time familiar with every quarter of the city, was told the boat was in readiness for the party at a landing near the Grand Gate of Blacherne; to make which, it being on the Golden Horn well up in the northwest, he must turn the hill back of the Prince's residence, and pursue one of the streets running parallel with the wall. Thither he accordingly bent his steps, followed by the porters of the sedans, and an increasing but respectful assemblage of curious citizens.

Scarcely had the progress begun before the Prince, watching through his front window, saw a man approach the side of Lael's chair, and peer into it. His wit served him well and instantly.

"'Tis he—the insolent!—Close up!" he cried, to his porters.

The intruder at the sound of his voice looked at him once, then disappeared in the throng. He was young, handsome, showily dressed, and beyond question the person of whom Lael had complained. Though smarting under the insult, and a suspicion, suddenly engendered, of a

watch kept over his house, the Prince concluded the stranger was of noble connection, and that the warrant for his boldness was referable to family influence. While his subtle mind was pothering with schemes of detection, the affair presented itself in another light, and he laughed at his own dulness.

"'Tis nothing," he reflected—"nothing! The boy is in love, and allowing his passion to make a fool of him. I have only to see my pretty Gul–Bahar does not return the madness."

Deciding then to make inquiry and satisfy himself who the young admirer was, he dismissed the subject.

Presently Nilo turned into a street of some width compared with the generality of thoroughfares in the city. On the left hand were shops and pretentious houses; on the right, towered the harbor wall. The people attending the procession increased instead of dispersing; but as they continued in good nature, they gave him no concern. Their comments amongst themselves were about equally divided between Nilo and Lael.

"Beautiful, beautiful!" one said, catching sight of the latter through the windows of the chair.

"Who is she?"

"A daughter of a Prince of India."

"And the Prince—Who is he?"

"Ask some one who knows. There he is in the second chair."

Once a woman went close to Lael, snatched a look, and stepped back, with clasped hands, crying:

"'Tis the Sweet Mother herself!"

Without other incident, the procession passed the gate of St. Peter, and was nearing that of Blacherne, when a flourish of trumpets announced a counter pageant coming down the street from the opposite direction. A man near by shouted:

"The Emperor! The Emperor!"

Another seconded him.

"Long live the good Constantine!"

The words were hardly uttered before they were answered:

"The *azymite*! The *azymite*! Down with the betrayer of Christ!"

In less than a minute the Prince was being borne along in the midst of two howling factions. Scarcely knowing whether to take Lael into a house or go on, he tried to communicate with Nilo; but in unconsciousness of the tempest so suddenly risen, that grandson of a king marched on in unremitted stateliness, until directly a band of trumpeters in magnificent livery confronted him.

The astonishment was mutual. Nilo halted, dropping his headless lance in defence; the trumpeters quit blowing, and, opening order, filed hastily by him, their faces saying with a distinctness words could not have helped:

"A son of Satan! Beware!"

The chairs were also brought to a halt.

Thereupon the people, now a mob apparently ready to tear each other into bloody ribbons, refused to give way to the trumpeters. Nilo finally comprehending the situation returned to Lael just as the Prince on foot came up to her. She was pale and trembling with fear.

The deadlock between the musicians and the mob was brought to an end by the appearance of a detachment of the Imperial guard. A mounted officer, javelin in hand, rode up and shouted:

"The Emperor! Make way for the Emperor!"

While he was speaking, the horsemen behind him came on steadily. There was irresistible persuasion in the glitter of their spears; besides it was matter of universal knowledge that the steel panoply of each rider concealed a mercenary foreigner who was never so happy as when riding over a Greek. One yell louder and more defiant than any yet uttered—"The azymite, the azymite!"—and the mob broke and fled. At a signal from the officer, the guards, as they came on, opened right and left of the chairs, and passed them with scarce notice.

A few words from the Prince to Lael dispelled her fears.

"It is an every–day affair," he said, lightly; "an amusement of the people, the Roman factionists against the Greek. Nobody is ever hurt, except in howling he opens his jaws too wide."

The levity was affected, but mastering the irritation he really felt, the Prince was about to make acknowledgment to the officer for his timely intervention, when another personage appeared, claiming his attention. Indeed his heart began beating unusually fast, and in spite of himself his face flushed—he knew he had his wish—the meeting with Constantine was come!

The last Emperor of the Byzantines sat in an open chair borne upon the shoulders of eight carriers in striking livery—a handsome man in his forty–sixth year, though apparently not more than thirty–eight or forty. His costume was that of Basileus, which was a religious dignity.

A close–fitting cap of red velvet covered his head, with a knot of purple silk triply divided on the top; while a pliable circlet of golden scales, clearing the brows, held the cap securely in place. On each scale a ruby of great size sparkled in solitaire setting. The circlet was further provided with four strings of pearls, two by each ear, dangling well down below in front of the shoulders. A loose drab robe or gown, drawn close at the waist, clothed him, neck, arms, body and nether limbs, answering excellently as ground for a cope the color of the cap, divided before and behind into embroidered squares defined by rows of pearls. Boots of purple leather, also embroidered, gave finish to the costume. Instead of sword or truncheon, he carried a plain ivory crucifix. The people staring at him from the doors and windows knew he was going to Sancta Sophia intent on some religious service.

While the Emperor was thus borne down upon the Prince, his dark eyes, kindly looking, glanced from Nilo to Lael, and finally came to rest full upon the face of the master. The officer returned to him. A few paces off, the imperial chair stopped, and a conversation ensued, during which a number of high officials who were of the sovereign's suite on foot closed up in position to separate their Lord from a mounted rear guard.

The Prince of India kept his mind perfectly. Having exchanged glances with the Emperor, he was satisfied an impression was made strong enough to pique curiosity, and at the same time fix him in the royal memory. With a quick sense of the proprieties, he thereupon addressed himself to moving his carriages to the left, that when the conference with the officers was concluded the Emperor might have the right of way with the least possible obstruction.

Presently the Acolyte—such the officer proved to be—approached the Prince.

"His Imperial Majesty," he said, courteously, "would be pleased could I inform him the name and title of the stranger whose progress he has been so unfortunate as to interrupt."

The Prince answered with dignity:

"I thank you, noble sir, for the fair terms in which you couch the inquiry, not less than the rescue I and my daughter owe you from the mob."

The Acolyte bowed.

"And not to keep his Imperial Majesty waiting," the Prince continued, "return him the compliments of a Prince of India, at present a resident of this royal and ancient capital. Say also it will give me happiness far beyond the power of words when I am permitted to salute him, and render the veneration and court to which his character and place amongst the rulers of the earth entitle him."

At the conclusion of the complex, though courtierly reply, the speaker walked two steps forward, faced the Emperor, and touched the ground with his palms, and rising, carried them to his forehead.

The answer duly delivered, the Emperor responded to the salaam with a bow and another message.

"His Imperial Majesty," the Acolyte said, "is pleased at meeting the Prince of India. He was not aware he had a guest of such distinction in his capital. He desires to know the place of residence of his noble friend, that he may communicate with him, and make amends for the hindrance which has overtaken him to–day."

The Prince gave his address, and the interview ended.

It is of course the reader's privilege to pass judgment upon the incidents of this rencounter; at least one of the parties to it was greatly pleased, for he knew the coveted invitation would speedily follow.

While the Emperor was borne past, Lael received his notice more especially than her guardian; when they were out of hearing, he called the Acolyte to his side.

"Didst thou observe the young person yonder?" he asked.

"The coronet she wears certifies the Prince of India to be vastly rich," the other answered.

"Yes, the Princes of India, if we may judge by common report, are all rich; wherefore I thought not of that, but rather of the beauty of his daughter. She reminded me of the Madonna on the Panagia in the transept of our church at Blacherne."

CHAPTER VIII

RACING WITH A STORM

One who has seen the boats in which fishermen now work the eddies and still waters of the Bosphorus will not require a description of the vessel the Prince and Lael stepped into when they arrived at the Grand Gate of Blacherne. He need only be told that instead of being pitch–black outside and in, it was white, except the gunwale which was freshly gilt. The untravelled reader, however, must imagine a long narrow craft, upturned at both ends, graceful in every line, and constructed for speed and beauty. Well aft there was a box without cover, luxuriously cushioned, lined with chocolate velvet, and wide enough to seat two persons comfortably; behind it, a decked space for a servant, pilot or guard. This arrangement left all forward for the rowers, each handling two oars.

Ten rowers, trained, stout, and clad in white headkerchiefs, shirts and trousers of the same hue, and Greek jackets of brilliant scarlet, profusely figured over with yellow braid, sat stolidly, blades in hand and ready dipped, when the passengers took their places, the Prince and Lael in the box, and Nilo behind them as guard. The vessel was too light to permit a ceremonious reception.

In front of the party, on the northern shore of the famous harbor, were the heights of Pera. The ravines and grass–green benches into which they were broken, with here and there a garden hut enclosed in a patch of filbert bushes—for Pera was not then the city it now is—were of no interest to the Prince; dropping his eyes to the water, they took in a medley of shipping, then involuntarily turned to the cold gray face of the wall he was leaving. And while seeing in vivid recollection the benignant countenance of Constantine bent upon him from the chair in the street, he thought of the horoscope he had spent the night in taking and the forenoon in

calculating. With a darkened brow, he gave the word, and the boat was pushed off and presently seeking the broader channel of the Bosphorus.

The day was delightful. A breeze danced merrily over the surface of the water. Soft white summer clouds hung so sleepily in the southwest they scarce suggested motion. Seeing the color deepen in Lael's cheeks, and listening to her questions, he surrendered himself to the pleasures of the situation, not the least being the admiration she attracted.

By ships at anchor, and through lesser craft of every variety they sped, followed by exclamations frequently outspoken:

"Who is she? Who can she be?"

Thus pursued, they flew past the gate of St. Peter, turned the point of Galata, and left the Fish Market port behind; proceeding then in parallelism with the north shore, they glided under the great round tower so tall and up so far overhead it seemed a part of the sky. Off Tophane, they were in the Bosphorus, with Scutari at their right, and Point Serail at their backs.

Viewed from the harbor on the sea, the old historic Point leaves upon the well informed an impression that in a day long gone, yielding to a spasm of justice, Asia cast it off into the waves. Its beauty is Circean. Almost from the beginning it has been the chosen place in which men ran rounds gay and grave, virtuous and wanton, foolish and philosophic, brave and cowardly—where love, hate, jealousy, avarice, ambition and envy have delighted to burn their lights before Heaven—where, possibly with one exception, Providence has more frequently come nearer lifting its veil than in any other spot of earth.

Again and again, the Prince, loth to quit the view, turned and refilled his eyes with Sancta Sophia, of which, from his position, the wall at the water's edge, the lesser churches of the Virgin Hodegetria and St. Irene, and the topmost sections far extending of the palaces of Bucoleon seemed but foundations. The edifice, as he saw it then, depended on itself for effect, the Turk having not yet, in sign of Mohammedan conversion, broken the line of its marvellous dome with minarets. At length he set about telling stories of the Point.

Off the site of the present palace of Dolma–Batchi he told of Euphrosyne, the daughter of the Empress Irene; and seeing how the sorrowful fortune of the beautiful child engaged Lael's sympathies, he became interested as a narrator, and failed to notice the unusual warmth tempering the air about Tchiragan. Neither did he observe that the northern sky, before so clear and blue, was whitening with haze.

To avoid the current running past Arnoot–Kouy, the rowers crossed to the Asiatic side under the promontory of Candilli.

Other boats thronged the charming expanse; but as most of them were of a humbler class sporting one rower, the Prince's, with its liveried ten, was a surpassing attraction. Sometimes the strangers, to gratify their curiosity, drew quite near, but always without affronting him; knowing the homage was to Lael, he was happy when it was effusively rendered.

His progress was most satisfactory until he rounded Candilli. Then a flock of small boats came down upon him pell–mell, the rowers pulling their uttermost, the passengers in panic.

The urgency impelling them was equally recognized by the ships and larger vessels out in the channel. Anchors were going down, sails furling, and oars drawing in. Above them, moreover, much beyond their usual levels of flight troops of gulls were circling on rapid wings screaming excitedly.

The Prince had reached the part of greatest interest in the story he was telling—how the cruel and remorseless Emperor Michel, determined to wed the innocent and helpless Euphrosyne, shamelessly cheated the Church and cajoled the Senate—when Nilo touched his shoulder, and awoke him to the situation. A glance over the water—another at the sky—and he comprehended danger of some kind was impending. At the same moment Lael commenced shivering and complaining of cold. The air had undergone a sudden change. Presently Nilo's red cloak was sheltering her.

The boat was in position to bring everything into view, and he spoke to the rowers:

"A storm is rising."

They ceased work, and looked over their shoulders, each for himself.

"A blow from the sea, and it comes fast. What we shall do is for my Lord to say," one of them returned.

The Prince grew anxious for Lael. What was done must be for her—he had no thought else.

A cloud was forming over the whole northeastern quarter of the sky, along the horizon black, overhead a vast gray wave, in its heart copper–hued, seething, interworking, now a distended sail, now a sail bursted; and the wind could he heard whipping the shreds into fleece, and whirling them a confusion of vaporous banners. Yet glassy, the water reflected the tint of the cloud. The hush holding it was like the drawn breath of a victim waiting the first turn of the torturous wheel.

The Asiatic shore offered the Prince a long stretch, and he persisted in coasting it until the donjon of the White Castle—that terror to Christians—arrested his eye. There were houses much nearer, some of them actually overhanging the water; but the donjon seemed specially inviting; at all events, he coolly reflected, if the Governor of the Castle denied him refuge, the little river near by known as the Sweet Waters of Asia would receive him, and getting under its bank, he might hope to escape the fury of the wind and waves. He shouted resolutely:

"To the White Castle! Make it before the wind strikes, my men, and I will double your hire."

"We may make it," the rower answered, somewhat sullenly, "but"—

"What?" asked the Prince.

"The devil has his lodgings there. Many men have gone into its accursed gates on errands of peace, and never been heard of again."

The Prince laughed.

"We lose time—forward! If there be a fiend in the Castle, I promise you he is not waiting for us."

The twenty oars fell as one, and the boat jumped like a steed under a stab of the spur.

Thus boldly the race with the storm was begun. The judgment of the challenger, assuming the Prince to be such, may be questioned. The river was the goal.

Could he reach it before the wind descended in dangerous force?—That was the very point of contest.

The chances, it is to be remembered next, were not of a kind to admit weighing with any approach to certainty; it was difficult even to marshal them for consideration. The distance was somewhat less than three–quarters of a mile; on the other part, the competing cloud was wrestling with the mountain height of Alem Daghy, about four miles away. The dead calm was an advantage; unfortunately it was more than offset by the velocity of the current which, though not so strong by the littoral of Candilli as under the opposite bluffs of Roumeli–Hissar, was still a serious opposing force. The boatmen were skilful, and could be relied upon to pull loyally; for, passing the reward offered in the event of their winning, the dangers of failure were to them alike. Treating the contest as a race, with the storm and the boat as competitors, the Prince was not without chances of success.

But whatever the outcome of the venture, Lael would be put to discomfort. His care of her was so habitually marked by tender solicitude one cannot avoid wondering at him now.

After all he may have judged the affair more closely than at first appears. The sides of the boat were low, but danger from that cause might be obviated by the skill of the rowers; and then Alem Daghy was not a trifling obstacle in the path of the gale. It might be trusted to hold the cloud awhile; after which a time would be required by the wind to travel the miles intervening.

Certainly it had been more prudent to make the shore, and seek refuge in one of the houses there. But the retort of the spirited Jew of that day, as in this, was a contemptuous refusal of assistance, and the degree to which this son of Israel was governed by the eternal resentment can be best appreciated by recalling the number of his days on earth.

At the first response to the vigorous pull of the oarsmen, Lael drew the red cloak over her face, and laid her head against the Prince. He put his arm around her, and seeing nothing and saying nothing, she trusted in him.

The rowers, pulling with strength from the start, gradually quickened the stroke, and were presently in perfect harmony of action. A short sough accompanied each dip of the blades; an expiration, like that of the woodman striking a blow with his axe, announced the movement completed. The cords of their brawny necks played fast and free; the perspiration ran down their faces like rain upon glass. Their teeth clinched. They turned neither right nor left; but with their straining eyes fixed upon him, by his looks they judged both their own well–doing and the progress of their competitor.

Seeing the boat pointed directly toward the Castle, the Prince watched the cloud. Occasionally he commended the rowers.

"Well done, my men!—Hold to that, and we will win!"

The unusual brightness of his eyes alone betrayed excitement. Once he looked over the yet quiet upper field of water. His was the only vessel in motion. Even the great ships were lying to. No—there was another small boat like his own coming down along the Asiatic shore as if to meet him. Its position appeared about as far above the mouth of the river as his was below it; and its three or five rowers were plainly doing their best. With grim pleasure, he accepted the stranger as another competitor in the race.

The friendly heights of Alem, seen from the Bosphorus, are one great forest always beautifully green. Even as the Prince looked at them, they lost color, as if a hand out of the cloud had suddenly dropped a curtain of white gauze over them. He glanced back over the course, then forward. The donjon was showing the loopholes that pitted its southern face. Excellent as the speed had been, more was required. Half the distance remained to be overcome—and the enemy not four miles away.

"Faster, men!" he called out. "The gust has broken from the mountain. I hear its roaring."

They turned involuntarily, and with a look measured the space yet to be covered, the distance of the foe, and the rate at which he was coming. Nor

less did they measure the danger. They too heard its warning, the muffled roar as of rocks and trees snatched up and grinding to atoms in the inner coils of the cloud.

"It is not a blow," one said, speaking quick, "but a"—

"Storm."

The word was the Prince's.

"Yes, my Lord."

Just then the water by the boat was rippled by a breath, purring, timorous, but icy.

The effect on the oarsmen was stronger than any word from the master could have been. They finished a pull long and united; then while the oars swung forward taking reach for another, they all arose to their feet, paused a moment, dipped the blades deeper, gave vent to a cry so continuous it sounded like a wail, and at the same time sunk back into their seats, pulling as they fell. This was their ultimate exertion. A jet of water spurted from the foot of the sharp bow, and the bubbles and oar eddies flew behind indistinguishably.

"Well done!" said the Prince, his eyes glowing.

Thenceforward the men continued to rise at the end of a stroke, and fall as they commenced delivery of another. Their action was quick, steady, machine–like; they gripped the water deep, and made no slips; with a thought of the exhilaration an eagle must feel when swooping from his eyrie, the Prince looked at the cloud defiantly as a challenger might. Each moment the donjon loomed up more plainly. He saw now, not merely the windows and loopholes, but the joinery of the stones in their courses. Suddenly he beheld another wonder—an army of men mounted and galloping along the river bank toward the Castle.

The array stretched back into the woods. In its van were two flags borne side by side, one green, the other red. Both were surrounded by a troop in bright armor. No need for him to ask to whom they belonged. They told him of Mecca and Mahomet—on the red, he doubted not seeing the old Ottomanic symbols, in their meaning poetic, in their simplicity beautiful

as any ever appropriated for martial purposes. The riders were Turks. But why the green flag? Where it went somebody more than the chief of a sanjak, more than the governor of a castle, or even a province, led the way.

The number trailing after the flags was scarcely less mysterious. They were too many to be of the garrison; and then the battlements of the Castle were lined with men also under arms. Not daring to speak of this new apparition lest his oarsmen might take alarm, the Prince smiled, thinking of another party to the race—a fourth competitor.

He sought the opposing boat next. It had made good time. There were five oarsmen in it; and, like his own, they were rising and falling with each stroke. In the passengers' place, he could make out two persons whom he took to be women.

A roll of thunder from the cloud startled the crew. Clear, angry, majestic, it filled the mighty gorge of the Bosphorus. Under the sound the water seemed to shrink away. Lael looked out from her hiding, but as quickly drew back, crowding closer to the Prince. To calm her he said, lightly,

"Fear nothing, O my Gul Bahar! A pretty race we are having with the cloud yonder; we are winning, and it is not pleased. There is no danger."

She answered by doubling the folds of the gown about her head.

Steadily, lithely, and with never an error the rowers drove through the waves—steadily, and in exact time, their cry arose cadencing each stroke. They did their part truly. Well might the master cry them, "Good, good." But all the while the wind was tugging mightily at its cloudy car; every instant the rattle of its wheels sounded nearer. The trees on the hills behind the Castle were bending and bowing; and not merely around the boat, but far as could be seen the surface of the ancient channel was a–shirr and a–shatter under beating of advance gusts.

And now the mouth of the Sweet Waters, shallowed by a wide extended osier bank, came into view; and the Castle was visible from base to upper merlon, the donjon, in relief against the blackened sky, rising more ghostly than ever. And right at hand were the flags, and the riders galloping with them. And there, coming bravely in, was the competing boat.

Over toward Roumeli–Hissar the sea birds congregated in noisy flocks, alarmed at the long line of foam the wind was whisking down the current. Behind the foam, the world seemed dissolving into spray.

Then the boats were seen from the Castle, and a company of soldiers ran out and down the bank. A noise like the rushing of a river sounded directly overhead. The wind struck the Castle, and in the thick of the mists and flying leaves hurled at it, the donjon disappeared.

"We win, we win, my men!" the Prince shouted. "Courage—good spirit—brave work—treble wages! Wine and wassail to–morrow!"

The boat, with the last word, shot into the little river, and up to the landing of the Castle just as the baffled wind burst over the refuge. And simultaneously the van of the army galloped under the walls and the competing boat arrived.

CHAPTER IX

IN THE WHITE CASTLE

The landing was in possession of dark–faced, heavily bearded men, with white turbans, baggy trousers, gray and gathered at the ankles, and arms of every kind, bows, javelins, and cimeters.

The Prince, stepping from his boat, recognized them as Turkish soldiers. He had hardly time to make the inspection, brief as it was, before an officer, distinguished by a turban, kettle–shaped and elaborately infolded, approached him.

"You will go with me to the Castle," he said.

The official's tone and manner were imperative. Suppressing his displeasure, the Prince replied, with dignity:

"The Governor is courteous. Return to him with my thanks, and say that when I decided to come on in the face of the storm, I made no doubt of his giving me shelter until it would be safe to resume my journey. I fear, however, his accommodations will be overtaxed; and since the river is protected from the wind, it would be more agreeable if he would permit me to remain here."

The response betrayed no improvement in manner:

"My order is to bring you to the Castle."

Some of the boatmen at this raised their eyes and hands toward heaven; others crossed themselves, and, like men taking leave of hope, cried out, "O Holy Mother of God!"

Yet the Prince restrained himself. He saw contention would be useless, and said, to quiet the rowers: "I will go with you. The Governor will be reasonable. We are unfortunates blown to his hands by a tempest, and to make us prisoners under such circumstances would be an abuse of one of

the first and most sacred laws of the Prophet. The order did not comprehend my men; they may remain here."

Lael heard all this, her face white with fear.

The conversation was in the Greek tongue. At mention of the law, the Turk cast a contemptuous look at the Prince, much as to say, Dog of an unbeliever, what dost thou with a saying of the Prophet? Then dropping his eyes to Lael and the boatmen, he answered in disdain of argument or explanation:

"You—they—all must go."

With that, he turned to the occupants of the other boat, and raising his voice the better to be heard, for the howling of the wind was very great, he called to them:

"Come out."

They were a woman in rich attire, but closely veiled, and a companion at whom he gazed with astonishment. The costume of the latter perplexed him; indeed, not until that person, in obedience to the order, erected himself to his full stature upon the landing, was he assured of his sex.

They were the Princess Irene and Sergius the monk.

The conversation between them in the Homeric palace has only to be recalled to account for their presence. Departing from Therapia at noon, according to the custom of boatmen wishing to pass from the upper Bosphorus, they had been carried obliquely across toward the Asiatic shore where the current, because of its greater regularity, is supposed to facilitate descent. When the storm began to fill the space above Alem Daghy, they were in the usual course; and then the question that had been put to the Prince of India was presented to the Princess Irene. Would she land in Asia or recross to Europe?

The general Greek distrust of the Turks belonged to her. From infancy she had been horrified with stories of women prisoners in their hands. She preferred making Roumeli–Hissar; but the boatmen protested it was too late; they said the little river by the White Castle was open, and they could

reach it before the storm; and trusting in their better judgment, she submitted to them.

Sergius, on the landing, pushed the cowl back, and was about to speak, but the wind caught his hair, tossing the long locks into tangle. Seeing him thus in a manner blinded, the Princess took up the speech. Drawing the veil aside, she addressed the officer:

"Art thou the Governor of the Castle?"

"No."

"Are we to be held guests or prisoners?"

"That is not for me to say."

"Carry thou then a message to him who may be the Governor. Tell him I am the Princess Irene, by birth near akin to Constantine, Emperor of the Greeks and Romans; that, admitting this soil is lawfully the property of his master the Sultan, I have not invaded it, but am here in search of temporary refuge. Tell him if I go to his Castle a prisoner, he must answer for the trespass to my royal kinsman, who will not fail to demand reparation; on the other hand, if I become his guest, it must be upon condition that I shall be free to depart as I came, with my friend and my people, the instant the wind and waves subside. Yes, and the further condition, that he wait upon me as becomes my station, and personally offer such hospitality as his Castle affords. I shall receive his reply here."

The officer, uncouth though he was, listened with astonishment not in the least disguised; and it was not merely the speech which impressed him, nor yet the spirit with which it was given; the spell was in the unveiled face. Never in his best dream of the perfected Moslem Paradise had he seen loveliness to compare with it. He stood staring at her.

"Go," she repeated. "There will be rain presently."

"Who am I to say thou art?" he asked.

"The Princess Irene, kinswoman of the Emperor Constantine."

The officer made a low salaam to her, and walked hurriedly off to the Castle.

His soldiers stood in respectful remove from the prisoners—such the refugees must for the present be considered—leaving them grouped in close vicinity, the Prince and the monk ashore, the Princess and Lael seated in their boats.

Calamity is a rough master of ceremonies; it does not take its victims by the hand, and name them in words, but bids them look to each other for help. And that was precisely what the two parties now did.

Unsophisticated, and backward through inexperience, Sergius was nevertheless conscious of the embarrassing plight of the Princess. He had also a man's quick sense of the uselessness of resistance, except in the way of protest. To measure the stranger's probable influence with the Turks, he looked first at the Prince, and was not, it must be said, rewarded with a return on which to found hope or encouragement. The small, stoop–shouldered old man, with a great white beard, appeared respectable and well–to–do in his black velvet cap and pelisse; his eyes were very bright, and his cheeks hectic with resentment at the annoyance he was undergoing; but that he could help out of the difficulty appeared absurd.

Having by this time rescued his hair from the wind, and secured it under his cowl, he looked next at Lael. His first thought was of the unfitness of her costume for an outing in a boat under the quietest of skies. A glance at the Princess, however, allayed the criticism; while the display of jewelry was less conspicuous, her habit was quite as rich and unsubstantial. It dawned upon him then that custom had something to do with the attire of Greek women thus upon the water. That moment Lael glanced up at him, and he saw how childlike her face was, and lovely despite the anxiety and fear with which it was overcast. He became interested in her at once.

The monk's judgment of the little old man was unjust. That master of subtlety had in mind run forward of the situation, and was already providing for its consequences.

He shared the surprise of the Turk when the Princess raised her veil. Overhearing then her message to the Governor, delivered in a manner calm, self–possessed, courageous, dignified, and withal adroit, he resolved to place Lael under her protection.

"Princess," he said, doffing his cap unmindful of the wind, and advancing to the side of her boat, "I crave audience of you, and in excuse for my unceremoniousness, plead community in misfortune, and a desire to make my daughter here safe as can be."

She surveyed him from head to foot; then turned her eyes toward Lael, sight of whom speedily exorcised the suspicion which for the instant held her hesitant.

"I acknowledge the obligation imposed by the situation." she replied; "and being a Christian as well as a woman, I cannot without reason justifiable in sight of Heaven deny the help you ask. But, good sir, first tell me your name and country."

"I am a Prince of India exercising a traveller's privilege of sojourning in the imperial city."

"The answer is well given; and if hereafter you return to this interview, O Prince, I beg you will not lay my inquiry to common curiosity."

"Fear not," the Prince answered; "for I learned long ago that in the laws prescribed for right doing prudence is a primary virtue; and making present application of the principle, I suggest, if it please you to continue a discourse which must be necessarily brief, that we do so in some other tongue than Greek."

"Be it in Latin then," she said, with a quick glance at the soldiers, and observing his bow of acquiescence, continued, "Thy reverend beard, O Prince, and respectable appearance, are warranties of a wisdom greater than I can ever attain; wherefore pray tell me how I, a feeble woman, who may not be able to release herself from these robbers, remorseless from religious prejudice, can be of assistance to thy daughter, now my younger sister in affliction."

She accompanied the speech with a look at Lael so kind and tender it could not be misinterpreted.

"Most fair and gentle Princess, I will straight to the matter. Out on the water, midway this and the point yonder, when too late for me to change direction or stay my rowers, I saw a body of horsemen, whom I judged to

be soldiers, moving hurriedly down the river bank toward the Castle. A band richly caparisoned, carrying two flags, one green, the other red, moved at their head. The former, you may know, has a religious signification, and is seldom seen in the field except a person of high rank be present. It is my opinion, therefore, that our arrest has some reference to the arrival of such a personage. In confirmation you may yet hear the musical flourish in his honor."

"I hear drums and trumpets," she replied, "and admit the surmise an ingenious accounting for an act otherwise unaccountable."

"Nay, Princess, with respect to thyself at least, call it a deed intolerable, and loud with provocation."

"From your speech, O Prince, I infer familiarity with these faithless barbarians. Perhaps you can make your knowledge of them so far serviceable as to tell me the great man's name."

"Yes, I have had somewhat to do with Turks; yet I cannot venture the name, rank or purpose of the newcomer. Pursuing the argument, however, if my conjecture be true, then the message borne the Governor, though spirited, and most happily accordant with your high degree, will not accomplish your release, simply because the reason of the capture in the first place must remain a reason for detaining you in the next. In brief, you may anticipate rejection of the protest."

"What, think you they will hold me prisoner?"

"They are crafty."

"They dare not!" and the Princess' cheek reddened with indignation. "My kinsman is not powerless—and even the great Amurath"—

"Forgive me, I pray; but there was never mantle to cover so many crimes as the conveniences kings call 'reasons of state.'"

She looked vaguely up the river which the tempest was covering with promiscuous air–blown drifting; but recovering, she said: "It is for me to pray pardon, Prince. I detain you."

"Not at all," he answered. "I have to remark next, if my conjecture prove correct, a lady of imperial rank might find herself ill at ease and solitary in

a hold like this Castle, which, speaking by report, is now kept to serve some design of war to come more particularly than domestic or social life."

The imagination of the Princess caught the idea eagerly, and, becoming active, presented a picture of a Moslem lair without women or apartments for women. Her mind filled with alarm.

"Oh, that I could recall the message!" she exclaimed. "I should not have tempted the Governor by offering to become his guest upon any condition."

"Nay, do not accuse yourself. The decision was brave and excellent in every view," he said, perceiving his purpose in such fair way. "For see—the storm increases in strength; yonder"—he pointed toward Alem Daghy—"the rain comes. Not by thy choice, O Princess, but the will of God, thou art here!"

He spoke impressively, and she bent her head, and crossed herself twice.

"A sad plight truly," he continued. "Fortunately it may be in a measure relieved. Here is my daughter, Lael by name. The years have scarcely outrun her childhood. More at mercy than thyself, because without rank to make the oppressor careful, or an imperial kinsman to revenge a wrong done her, she is subject to whatever threatens you—a cell in this infidel stronghold, ruffians for attendants, discomforts to cast her into fever, separation from me to keep her afraid. Why not suffer her to go with you? She can serve as tirewoman or companion. In villany the boldest often hesitate when two are to be overcome."

The speech was effective.

"O Prince, I have not words to express my gratitude. I am thy debtor. Heaven may have brought this crisis, but it has not altogether deserted me—And in good time! See—my messenger, with a following! Let thy daughter come, and sit with me now—and do thou stand by to lend me of thy wisdom in case appeal to it become necessary. Quick! Nay, Prince, Sergius is young and strong. Permit him to bring the child to me."

The monk made haste. Drawing the boat close to the shore, he gave Lael his strong hand. Directly she was delivered to the Princess, and seated beside her.

"Now they may come!"

Thus the Princess acknowledged the strength derivable from companionship. The result was perceptible in her voice once more clear, and her face actually sparkling with confidence and courage.

Then, drawn together in one group, the refugees awaited the officer.

"The Governor is coming," that worthy said, saluting the Princess.

Looking toward the Castle, the expectants beheld a score or more men issuing from the gate on foot. They were all in armor, and each complemented the buckler on his arm with a lance from which a colored pennon blew out straight and stiff as a panel. One walked in front singly, and immediately the Prince and Princess fixed upon him as the Governor, and kept him in eye curiously and anxiously.

That instant rain in large drops began to fall. The Governor appeared to notice the premonition, for looking at the angry sky he halted, and beckoned to his followers, several of whom ran to him, received an order, and then hastily returned to the Castle. He came on in quickened gait.

Here the Prince, with his greater experience, noticed a point which escaped his associates; and that was the extraordinary homage paid the stranger.

At the landing the officer and soldiers would have prostrated themselves, but with an imperious gesture, he declined the salutation.

The observers, it may be well believed, viewed the man afar with interest; when near, they scanned him as persons under arraignment study the judge, that from his appearance they may glean something of his disposition. He was above the average height of men, slender, and in armor —the armor of the East, adapted in every point to climate and light service. A cope or hood, intricately woven of delicate steel wire, and close enough to refuse an arrow or the point of a dagger, defended head, throat, neck, and shoulders, while open at the face; a coat, of the same artistic

mail, beginning under the hood, followed closely the contour of the body, terminating just above the knees as a skirt. Amongst Teutonic and English knights, on account of its comparative lightness, it would have been distinguished from an old–fashioned hauberk, and called *haubergeon*. A sleeveless *surcoat* of velvet, plain green in color, overlaid the mail without a crease or wrinkle, except at the edge of the skirt. *Chausses*, or leggins, also of steel, clothed the nether limbs, ending in shoes of thin lateral scales sharply pointed at the toes. A slight convexity on top, and the bright gold–gilt band by which, with regular interlacement, the cope was attached, gave the cap surmounting the head a likeness to a crown.

In style this armor was common. The preference Eastern cavaliers showed it may have been due in part at least to the fact that when turned out by a master armorer, after years of painstaking, it left the wearer his natural graces of person. Such certainly was the case here.

The further equipment of the man admits easy imagining. There were the gauntlets of steel, articulated for the fingers and thumbs; a broad flexible belt of burnished gold scales, intended for the cimeter, fell from the waist diagonally to the left hip; light spurs graced the heels; a dagger, sparkling with jewels, was his sole weapon, and it served principally to denote the peacefulness of his errand. As there was nothing about him to rattle or clank his steps were noiseless, and his movements agile and easy.

These martial points were naturally of chief attraction to the Prince of India, whose vast acquaintanceship with heroes and famous warriors made comparison a habit. On her side, the Princess, to whom accoutrement and manner were mere accessories, pleasing or otherwise, and subordinate, sought the stranger's face. She saw brown eyes, not very large, but exceedingly bright, quick, sharp, flying from object to object with flashes of bold inquiry, and quitting them as instantly; a round forehead on brows high–arched; a nose with the curvature of a Roman's; mouth deep–cornered, full–lipped, and somewhat imperfectly mustached and bearded; clear, though sunburned complexion—in brief, a countenance haughty, handsome, refined, imperious, telling in every line of exceptional birth, royal usages, ambition, courage, passion, and confidence. Most amazing,

however, the stranger appeared yet a youth. Surprised, hardly knowing whether to be pleased or alarmed, yet attracted, she kept the face in steady gaze.

Halting when a few steps from the group, the stranger looked at them as if seeking one in especial.

"Have a care, O Princess! This is not the Governor, but he of whom I spoke—the great man."

The warning was from the Prince of India and in Latin. As if to thank him for a service done—possibly for identifying the person he sought—the subject of the warning slightly bowed to him, then dropped his eyes to the Princess. A light blown out does not vanish more instantly than his expression changed. Wonder—incredulity—astonishment—admiration chased each other over his face in succession. Calling them emotions, each declared itself with absolute distinctness, and the one last to come was most decided and enduring. Thus he met her gaze, and so ardent, intense and continuous was his, that she reddened cheek and forehead, and drew down the veil; but not, it should be understood, resentfully.

The disappearance of the countenance, in effect like the sudden extinguishment of a splendor, aroused him. Advancing a step, he said to her, with lowered head and perceptible embarrassment:

"I come to offer hospitality to the kinswoman of the Emperor Constantine. The storm shows no sign of abatement, and until it does, my Castle yonder is at her order. While not sumptuous in appointment as her own palace, fortunately there are comfortable apartments in it where she can rest securely and with reserve. The invitation I presume to make in the name of my most exalted master Sultan Amurath, who takes delight in the amity existing between him and the Lord of Byzantium. To lay all fear, to dispel hesitation, in his name again, together with such earnest of good faith as lies in an appeal to the most holy Prophet of God, I swear the Princess Irene shall be safe from interruption while in the Castle, and free to depart from it at her pleasure. If she chooses, this tender of courtesy may, by agreement, here in the presence of these witnesses, be taken as an affair of state. I await her answer."

The Prince of India heard the speech more astonished by the unexceptional Latin in which it was couched than the propriety of the matter or the grace of its delivery, though, he was constrained to admit, both were very great. He also understood the meaning of the look the stranger had given him at the conclusion of his warning to the Princess, and to conceal his vexation, he turned to her.

That moment two covered chairs, brought from the Castle, were set down near by, and the rain began to fall in earnest.

"See," said the Governor, "the evidence of my care for the comfort of the kinswoman of the most noble Emperor Constantine. I feared it would rain before I could present myself to her; nor that alone, fair Princess—the chair must convict me of a wholesome dread of accusation in Constantinople; for what worse could be said than that I, a faithful Moslem, to whom hospitality is an ordination of religion, refused to open my gates to women in distress because they were Christians. Most noble and fair lady, behold how much I should esteem acceptance of my invitation!"

Irene looked at the Prince of India, and seeing assent in his face, answered:

"I will ask leave to report this courtesy as an affair of state that my royal kinsman may acknowledge it becomingly."

The Governor bowed very low while saying:

"I myself should have suggested the course."

"Also that my friends"—she pointed to the Prince of India, and the monk—"and all the boatmen, be included in the safeguard."

This was also agreed to; whereupon she arose, and for assistance offered her hand to Sergius. Lael was next helped from the boat. Then, taking to the chairs, the two were carried into the Castle, followed by the Prince and the monk afoot.

CHAPTER X

THE ARABIAN STORY–TELLER

The reader will doubtless refer the circumstance to the jealousy which is supposed to prompt the Faithful where women are required to pass before men; yet the best evidence of the Governor's thoughtfulness for his female guests met them at their approach to the Castle. There was not a man visible except a sentinel on the battlement above the gate, and he stood faced inwardly, making it impossible for him to see them when they drew near.

"Where are the horsemen of whom you spoke? And the garrison, where are they?" Sergius asked the Prince.

The latter shrugged his shoulders, as he answered:

"They will return presently."

Further proof of the same thoughtfulness was presented when the two chairs were set down in the broad stone–paved passage receiving from the front door. The sole occupant there was a man, tall as the monk, but unnaturally slender; indeed, his legs resembled those of a lay figure, so thin were they, while the residue of his person, although clad in a burnoose gorgeously embroidered, would have reminded a modern of the skeletons surgeons keep for office furniture. Besides blackness deep as the unlighted corner of a cellar, he had no beard. The Prince of India recognized him as one of the indispensables of an Eastern harem, and made ready to obey him without dissent—only the extravagance of the broidery on the burnoose confirmed him in the opinion that the chief just arrived outranked the Governor. "This is the Kislar Aga of a Prince," he said to himself.

The eunuch, like one accustomed to the duty, superintended the placement of the chairs; then, resting the point of a very bright crescent–

shaped sword on the floor, he said, in a voice more incisive than the ordinary feminine tenor:

"I will now conduct the ladies, and guard them. No one will presume to follow."

The Prince replied: "It is well; but they will be comforted if permitted to abide together."

He spoke with deference, and the black responded:

"This is a fort, not a palace. There is but one chamber for the two."

"And if I wish to communicate with them or they with me?"

"*Bismillah!*" the eunuch replied. "They are not prisoners. I will deliver what thou hast for them or they for thee."

Thereupon the Princess and Lael stepped from the chairs, and went with their guide. When they were gone, word sped through the Castle, and with clamor and clangor, doors opened, and men poured forth in companies. And again the Prince reflected: "Such discipline pertains to princes only."

Now the office of eunuch was by no means an exclusive pagan institution; time out of mind it had been a feature of Byzantine courts; and Constantine Dragases, the last, and probably the most Christian of Greek emperors, not only tolerated, but recognized it as honorable. With this explanation the reader ought not to be surprised if the Princess Irene accepted the guidance offered her without fear or even hesitation. Doubtless she had been in similar keeping many times.

Climbing a number of stairways, the eunuch brought his fair charges into a part of the Castle where there were signs of refinement. The floors were swept; the doors garnished with rugs; a delicate incense lingered in the air; and to rescue the tenants, whoever they might be, from darkness, lighted lamps swung from the ceiling, and were affixed to the walls. Stopping finally before a portiere, he held it aside while saying:

"Enter here, and be at home. Upon the table yonder there is a little bell; ring, and I will answer."

And seeing Lael clinging closely to the Princess, he added: "Be not afraid. Know ye rather that my master, when a child, heard the story of

Hatim, a warrior and poet of the Arabs, and ever since he has lived believing hospitality a virtue without which there can be no godliness. Do not forget the bell."

They entered and were alone.

To their amazement the room was more than comfortably furnished. What may be termed a chandelier swung from the ceiling with many lamps ready for lighting; under it there was a circular divan; then along the four sides a divan extended continuously, with pillows at the corners in heaps. Matting covered the floor, and here and there rugs of gay dyes offered noticeable degrees of warmth and coloring. Large trays filled the deep recesses of the windows, and though the smell of musk overpowered the sweet outgivings of the roses blooming in them, they sufficed to rouge the daylight somewhat scantily admitted. The roughness and chill of the walls were provided against by woollen drapery answering for arras.

They went first to one of the windows, and peered out. Below them the world was being deluged with fiercely driven rain. There was the Bosphorus lashed into waves already whitened with foam. The European shore was utterly curtained from sight. Gust after gust raved around the Castle, whistling and moaning; and as she beheld the danger escaped, the Princess thought of the saying of the Prince of India and repeated it in a spirit of thanksgiving: "By the will of God thou art here."

The reflection reconciled her to the situation, and led on till presently the face and martial figure of the Governor reproduced themselves to her fancy. How handsome he appeared—how courteous—how young!—scarcely older than herself! How readily she had yielded to his invitation! She blushed at the thought.

Lael interrupted the revery, which was not without charm, and for that reason would likely return, by bringing her a child's slipper found near the central divan; and while examining the embroidery of many–colored beads adorning it, she divined the truth.

Isolated as the Castle was on a frontier of the Islamic world, and crowded with men and material of war, yet the Governor was permitted his harem, and this was its room in common. Here his wives, many or few, for

the time banished to some other quarters, were in the habit of meeting for the enjoyment of the scant pleasantries afforded by life like theirs.

Again she was interrupted. The arras over one of the walls was pushed aside, and two women came in with refreshments. A third followed with a small table of Turkish pattern which she placed on the floor. The viands, very light and simple, were set upon the table; then a fourth one came bringing an armful of shawls and wraps. The last was a Greek, and she explained that the Lord of the Castle, her master, was pleased to make his guests comfortable. In the evening later a more substantial repast would be served. Meantime she was appointed to wait on them.

The guests, assured by the presence of other women in the Castle, partook of the refection; after which the table was removed, and the attendants for the present dismissed. Wrapping themselves then in shawls, for they had not altogether escaped the rain, and were beginning to feel the mists stealing into the chamber through the unglazed windows, they took to the divan, piling the cushions about them defensively.

In this condition, comfortable, cosey, perfectly at rest, and with the full enjoyment of the sensations common to every one in the midst of a novel adventure, the Princess proceeded to draw from Lael an account of herself; and the ingenuousness of the girl proved very charming, coupled as it was with a most unexpected intelligence. The case was the not unusual one of education wholly unsupported by experience. The real marvel to the inquisitor was that she should have made discovery of two such instances the same day, and been thrown into curious relation with them. And as women always run parallels between persons who interest them, the Princess was struck with the similarities between Sergius and Lael. They were both young, both handsome, both unusually well informed and at the same time singularly unsophisticated. In the old pagan style, what did Fate mean by thus bringing them together? She determined to keep watch of the event.

And when, in course of her account, Lael spoke of the Prince of India, Irene awoke at once to a mystery connected with him. Lacking the full story, the narrator could give just enough of it to stimulate wonder. Who

was he? Where was Cipango? He was rich—learned—knew all the sciences, all the languages—he had visited countries everywhere, even the inhabited islands. To be sure, he had not appeared remarkable; indeed, she gave him small attention when he was before her; she recalled him chiefly by his eyes and velvet pelisse. While she was mentally resolving to make better study of him, the eunuch appeared under the portiere, and, coming forward, said, with a half salaam to the Princess:

"My master does not wish his guests to think themselves forgotten. The kinswoman of the most august Emperor Constantine, he remembers, is without employment to lighten the passage of a time which must be irksome to her. He humbly prays her to accept his sympathy, and sends me to say that a famous story–teller, going to the court of the Sultan at Adrianople, arrived at the Castle to–day. Would the Princess be pleased to hear him?"

"In what tongue does he recite?" she asked.

"Arabic, Turkish, Greek, Latin, Hebrew," was the reply.

"Oh, a most wise man!"

Irene consulted Lael, and thinking to offer her amusement, assented to the suggestion, with thanks to the Governor.

"Have the veils ready," the eunuch said, as he retreated backward to the door. "The story–teller is a man, and he will come directly."

The story–teller was ushered in. He walked to the divan where his auditors sat, slowly, as if he knew himself under close observation, and courted it.

Now caravans were daily shows in Constantinople. The little bell of the donkey leading its string of laden camels through the narrow streets might be heard any hour, and the Shaykh in charge was almost invariably an Arab. So the Princess had seen many of the desert–born, and was familiar with their peculiarities; never, however, had chance brought a nobler specimen of the race before her. As he approached, stepping as modern stage heroes are wont, she saw the red slippers, the white shirt falling to the ankles and girdled at the waist, its bosom a capacious pocket, the white

and red striped cloak over the shoulders. She marked the material of which they were made, the shirt of selected Angora wool, the cloak of camel's hair, in its fineness iridescent and soft as velvet. She saw in the girdle an empty scabbard for a yatagan elaborately covered with brilliants. She saw on the head a kerchief of mixed silk and cotton, tasselled, heavily striated red and yellow, and secured by the usual cord; but she scarcely more than noticed them—the air of the man, high, stately, king–like, was a superior attraction, and she gazed at his face unconscious that her own was uncovered.

The features were regular, the complexion sunburned to the hue of reddish copper, the beard thin, the nose sharp, the cheeks hollow, the eyes, through the double shade of brows and kerchief, glittered like balls of polished black amber. His hands were crossed above the girdle after the manner of Eastern servants before acknowledged superiors; his salutation was expressive of most abject homage; yet when he raised himself, and met the glance of the Princess, his eyes lingered, and brightened, and directly he cast off or forgot his humility, and looked lordlier than an Emir boasting of his thousand tents, with ten spears to each, and a score of camels to the spear. She endured the gaze awhile; for it seemed she had seen the face before—where, she could not tell; and when, as presently happened, she began to feel the brightness of the eyes intenser growing, the sensation reminded her of the Governor at the landing. Could this be he? No, the countenance here was of a man already advanced in life. And why should the Governor resort to disguise? The end, nevertheless, was the same as on the landing—she drew down the veil. Then he became humble again, and spoke, his eyes downcast, his hands crossed:

"This faithful servant"—he pointed to the eunuch "my friend"—the eunuch crossed his hands, and assumed an attitude of pleased attention—"brought me from his master—may the most Merciful and Compassionate continue a pillow to the good man here and to his soul hereafter!—how a kinswoman of the Emperor whose capital is to the earth a star, and he as the brightness thereof, had taken refuge with him from the storm, and was now his guest, and languishing for want of amusement. Would I tell her a story? I have a horde of parables, tales, and traditions,

and many nations have contributed to it; but, alas, O Princess! they are simple, and such as beguile tentmen and tentwomen shut in by the desert, their fancies tender as children's. I fear your laughter. But here I am; and as the night bird sings when the moon is risen, because the moon is beautiful and must be saluted, even so I am obedient. Command me."

The speech was in Greek, with the slightest imperfection of accent; at the conclusion the Princess was silent.

"Knowest thou"—she at length said—"knowest thou of one Hatim, renowned as a warrior and poet of the Arabs?"

The eunuch saw the reference, and smiled. Asking of Hatim now was only another form of inquiry after his master; not merely had the latter been in her mind; she wished to know more about him. On his part, the story–teller arose from his servile posture, and asked with the animation of one to whom a favorite theme is presented:

"Noble lady, know you aught of the desert?"

"I have never been there," the Princess answered.

"Though not beautiful, it is the home of mysteries," he said, with growing enthusiasm. "When he whom in the same breath you worship as God and the Son of God—an opposition beyond the depth of our simple faith—made ready to proclaim himself, he went for a time into the Wilderness, and dwelt there. So likewise our Prophet, seeing the dawn of his day, betook himself to Hiva, a rock, bleak, barren, waterless. Why, O Princess, if not for purification, and because God of preference has founded his dwelling there, wasting it indeed the better to nurse his goodness in a perfected solitude? Granting this, why may I not assert without shocking you that the sons of the desert are the noblest of men? —"

"Such was Hatim!"

"In the Hijaz and the Nejd, they tell of him thus:"

"In the day the Compassionate set about world–making, which is but a pastime with him, nor nearly so much as nest–building to a mother–dove, he rested. The mountains and rivers and seas were in their beds, and the

land was variegated to please him, here a forest, there a grassy plain; nothing remained unfinished except the sand oceans, and they only wanted water. He rested."

"Now, if, with their sky, a sun–field in the day, a gallery of stars at night, and their winds, flying from sea to sea, but gathering no taint, the deserts are treeless, and unknowing the sweetness of gardens and the glory of grass, it was not by accident or forgetfulness; for with him, the Compassionate, the Merciful, there are no accidents or lapses of any kind. He is all attention and ever present. Thus the Throne verse—'Drowsiness overcomes him not nor sleep… His firmament spans the Heaven and the Earth, and the care of them does not distress him.'"

"Why then the yellowness and the burning, the sameness and solitude, and the earth intolerant of rain and running stream, and of roads and paths—why, if there was neither accident nor forgetfulness?"

"He is the High and the Great! Accuse him not!"

"In that moment of rest, not from weariness or overburden, but to approve the work done, and record the approval as a judgment, he said, speaking to his Almightiness as to a familiar: 'As it is it shall stay. A time will come when with men I, and the very name of me, shall go out utterly like the green of last year's leaf. He who walks in a garden thinks of it only; but he who abides in a desert, wanting to see the beautiful, must look into the sky, and looking there he shall be reminded of me, and say aloud and as a lover, 'There is no God but him, the Compassionate, the Merciful… The eyes see him not, but he seeth the eyes; and He is the Gracious, the Knowing'… So also comes a time when religion shall be without heart, dead, and the quickening of worship lost in idolatry; when men shall cry, God, my God, to stones and graven images, and sing to hear their singing, and the loud music it goes with. And that time shall be first in lands of growth and freshness, in cities where comforts and luxuries are as honey in hives after the flowering of palms. Wherefore—Lo, the need of deserts. There I shall never be forgotten. And out of them, out of their hardness and heat, out of their yellow distances and drouth, religion shall arise again, and go forth purified unto universality; for I shall be always

present there, a life–giver. And against those days of evil, I shall keep men there, the best of their kind, and their good qualities shall not rust; they shall be brave, for I may want swords; they shall keep the given word, for as I am the Truth, so shall my chosen be; there shall be no end to charity among them, for in such lands charity is life, and must take every form, friendship, love of one another, love of giving, and hospitality, unto which are riches and plenty. And in their worship, I shall be first, and honor next. And as Truth is the Soul of the World, it being but another of my names, for its salvation they shall speak with tongues of fire, this one an orator, that one a poet; and living in the midst of death, they shall fear me not at all, but dishonor more. Mine are the Sons of the Desert—the Word–Keepers!—the Unconquered and Conquerless! For my name's sake, I nominate them Mine, and I alone am the High and the Great… And there shall be amongst them exemplars of this virtue and that one singly; and at intervals through the centuries standards for emulation among the many, a few, in whom all the excellences shall be blent in indivisible comeliness.'"

"So came Hatim, of the Bene–Tayyi, lustrous as the moon of Ramazan to eager watchers on high hilltops, and better than other men, even as all the virtues together are better than any one of them, excepting charity and love of God."

"Now Hatim's mother was a widow, poor, and without relations, but beloved by the Compassionate, and always in his care, because she was wise beyond the men of her time, and kept his laws, as they were known, and taught them to her son. One day a great cry arose in the village. Everybody rushed to see the cause, and then joined in the clamor."

"Up in the north there was an appearance the like of which had never been beheld, nor were there any to tell what it was from hearsay. Some pooh–poohed, saying, contemptuously:"

"'Tis only a cloud.'"

"Others, observing how rapidly it came, in movement like a bird sailing on outspread motionless wings, said:"

"'A roc! A roc!'"

"When the object was nearer, a few of the villagers, in alarm, ran to their houses, shrieking:"

"'Israfil, Israfil! He is bringing the end of time!'"

"Soon the sight was nearly overhead; then it was going by, its edge overhead, the rest of it extending eastwardly; and it was long and broad as a pasture for ten thousand camels, and horses ten thousand. It had no likeness earthly except a carpet of green silk; nor could those standing under describe what bore it along. They thought they heard the sound of a strong wind, but as the air above far and near was full of birds great and small, birds of the water as well as the land, all flying evenly with the carpet, and making a canopy of their wings, and shade deeper than a cloud's, the beholders were uncertain whether the birds or the wind served it. In passing, it dipped gently, giving them a view of what it carried—a throne of pearl and rainbow, and a crowned King sitting in majesty; at his left hand, an army of spirits, at his right, an army of men in martial sheen."

"While the prodigy was before them, the spectators stirred not; nor was there one brave enough to speak; most of them with their eyes devoured it all, King and throne, birds, men and spirits; though afterwards there was asking:"

"'Did you see the birds?'"

"'No.'"

"'The spirits?'"

"'No.'"

"'The men?'"

"'I saw only the King upon His throne.'"

"In the passing, also, a man, in splendor of apparel, stood on the carpet's edge and shouted:"

"'God is great! I bear witness there is no God but God.'"

"The same instant something fell from his hand. When the marvel was out of sight in the south, some bethought them, and went to see what it was

which fell. They came back laughing, 'It was only a gourd, and as we have much better on our camel–saddles, we threw it away.'"

"But the mother of Hatim, listening to the report, was not content. In her childhood she heard what was tradition then; how Solomon, at the completion of his temple in Jerusalem, journeyed to Mecca upon a carpet of silk wafted by the wind, with men, spirits, and birds. Wherefore, saying to herself, 'It was Solomon going to Mecca. Not for nothing threw he the gourd,' she went alone, and brought it in, and opened it, finding three seeds —one red, like a ruby; a second blue, like a sapphire; the third green, like an emerald."

"Now she might have sold the seeds, for they were beautiful as gems cut for a crown, and enriched herself; but Hatim was all the world to her. They were for him, she said, and getting a brown nut such as washes up from vines in the sea, she cut it, put the treasures into it, sealed them there, and tied them around the boy's neck."

"'Thanks, O Solomon,' she said. 'There is no God but God; and I shall teach the lesson to my Hatim in the morning, when *al hudhud* flies for water; at noon, when it whistles to itself in the shade; and at night, when it draws a wing over its head to darken the darkness, and sleep.'"

"And from that day through all his days Hatim wore the brown nut with the three seeds in it; nor was there ever such an amulet before or since; for, besides being defended by the genii who are Solomon's servants, he grew one of the exemplars promised by God, having in himself every virtue. No one braver than he; none so charitable; none so generous and merciful; none so eloquent; none on whose lips poetry was such sweet speech for the exalting of souls; above all, never had there been such a keeper of his word of promise."

"And of this judge you by some of the many things they tell of him."

"A famine fell upon the land. It was when Hatim had become Sheik of his tribe. The women and children were perishing. The men could no more than witness their suffering. They knew not whom to accuse; they knew no one to receive a prayer. The time predicted was come—the name of God had gone out utterly, like the green of last year's leaf. In the Sheik's tent

even, as with the poorest, hunger could not be allayed—there was nothing to eat. The last camel had been devoured—one horse remained. More than once the good man went out to kill him, but the animal was so beautiful—so affectionate—so fleet! And the desert was not wide enough to hold his fame! How much easier to say, 'Another day—to–morrow it may rain.'"

"He sat in his tent telling his wife and children stories, for he was not merely the best warrior of his day; he was the most renowned poet and storyteller. Riding into battle, his men would say, 'Sing to us, O Hatim—sing, and we will fight.' And they he loved best, listening to him, had nigh forgot their misery, when the curtain of the tent was raised."

"'Who is there?' he asked."

"'Thy neighbor,' and the voice was a woman's. 'My children are anhungred and crying, and I have nothing for them. Help, O Sheik, help or they die.'"

"'Bring them here,' he said, rising."

"'She is not worse off than we,' said his wife, 'nor are her children more hungry than ours. What will you do?'"

"'The appeal was to me,' he answered."

"And passing out, he slew the horse, and kindled a fire; then, while the stranger and her children were sharing piece by piece with his own, 'Shame, shame!' he said, 'that ye alone should eat;' and going through the dowar, he brought the neighbors together, and he only went hungry. There was no more of the meat left. Was ever one merciful like Hatim? In combat, he gave lives, but took none. Once an antagonist under his foot, called to him: 'Give me thy spear, Hatim,' and he gave it."

"'Foolish man!' his brethren exclaimed."

"'What else was there?' he answered. 'Did not the poor man ask a gift of me?'"

"Never a captive besought his help vainly. On a journey once, a prisoner begged him to buy his liberty; but he was without the money required, and on that account he was sorely distressed. To his entreaties, the strangers listened hard–heartedly; at last he said to them:"

"Am not I—Hatim—good as he? Let him go, and take me.'"

"And knocking the chains from the unfortunate, he had them put on himself, and wore them until the ransom came."

"In his eyes a poet was greater than a king, and than singing a song well the only thing better was being the subject of a song. Perpetuation by tombs he thought vulgar; so the glory unremembered in verse deserved oblivion. Was it wonderful he gave and kept giving to story–tellers, careless often if what he thus disposed of was another's?"

"Once in his youth—and at hearing this, O Princess, the brown–faced sons of the desert, old and young, laugh, and clap their hands—he gave of his grandfather's store until the prudent old man, intending to cure him of his extravagance, sent him to tend his herds in the country. Alas!"

"Across the plain Hatim one day beheld a caravan, and finding it escorting three poets to the court of the King of El–Herah, he invited them to stop with him, and while he killed a camel for each of them, they recited songs in his praise, and that of his kin. When they wished to resume the journey, he detained them."

"'There is no gift like the gift of song,' he said. 'I will do better by you than will he, the King to whom you are going. Stay with me, and for every verse you write I will give you a camel. Behold the herd!'"

"And at departing, they had each a hundred camels, and he three hundred verses."

"'Where is the herd?' the grandfather asked, when next he came to the pasture."

"'See thou. Here are songs in honor of our house,' Hatim answered, proudly—'songs by great poets; and they will be repeated until all Arabia is filled with our glory.'"

"'Alas! Thou hast ruined me!' the elder cried, beating his breast."

"'What!' said Hatim, indignantly. 'Carest thou more for the dirty brutes than for the crown of honor I bought with them?'"

Here the Arab paused. The recitation, it is to be remarked, had been without action, or facial assistance—a wholly unornate delivery; and now

he kept stately silence. His eyes, intensely bright in the shadow of the *kufiyeh*, may have produced the spell which held the Princess throughout; or it may have been the eyes and voice; or, quite as likely, the character of Hatim touched a responsive chord in her breast.

"I thank you," she said, adding presently: "In saying I regret the story ended so soon, I pray you receive my opinion of its telling. I doubt if Hatim himself could have rendered it better."

The Arab recognized the compliment with the faintest of bows, but made no reply in words. Irene then raised her veil, and spoke again.

"Thy Hatim, O eloquent Arab, was warrior and poet, and, as thou hast shown him to me, he was also a philosopher. In what age did he live?"

"He was a shining light in the darkness preceding the appearance of the Prophet. That period is dateless with us."

"It is of little consequence," she continued. "Had he lived in our day, he would have been more than poet, warrior and philosopher—he would be a Christian. His charity and love of others, his denial of self, sound like the Christ. Doubtless he could have died for his fellow–men. Hast thou not more of him? Surely he lived long and happily."

"Yes," said the Arab, with a flash of the eyes to denote his appreciation of the circumstance. "He is reported to have been the most wretched of men. His wife—I pray you will observe I am speaking by the tradition—his wife had the power, so dreadful to husbands, of raising Iblis at pleasure. It delighted her to beat him and chase him from his tent; at last she abandoned him."

"Ah!" the Princess exclaimed. "His charities were not admirable in her eyes."

"The better explanation, Princess, may be found in a saying we have in the desert—'A tall man may wed a small woman, but a great soul shall not enter into bonds with a common one.'"

There was silence then, and as the gaze of the story–teller was again finding a fascination in her face, Irene took refuge behind her veil, but said, presently:

"With permission, I will take the story of Hatim for mine; but here is my friend—what hast thou for her?"

The story–teller turned to Lael.

"Her pleasure shall be mine," he said.

"I should like something Indian," the girl answered, timidly, for the eyes oppressed her also.

"Alas! India has no tales of love. Her poetry is about gods and abstract religions. Wherefore, if I may choose, I will a tale from Persia next. In that country there was a verse–maker called Firdousi, and he wrote a great poem, *The Shah Nameh*, with a warrior for hero. This is how Rustem, in single combat, killed Sohrab, not knowing the youth was his son until after the awful deed was done."

The tale was full of melancholy interest, and told with singular grace; but it continued until after nightfall; of which the party was admonished by the attendants coming to light the lamps. At the conclusion, the Arab courteously apologized for the time he had wrested from them.

"In dealing with us, O Princess," he said, "patience is full as lovely as charity."

Lifting the veil again, she extended her hand to him, saying, "The obligation is with us. I thank you for making light and pleasant an afternoon which else had been tedious."

He kissed her hand, and followed the eunuch to the door. Then the supper was announced.

CHAPTER XI

THE TURQUOISE RING

The Prince of India, left in the passage of the Castle with Sergius, was not displeased with the course the adventure appeared to be taking. In the first place, he felt no alarm for Lael; she might be uncomfortable in the quarter to which she had been conducted, but that was all, and it would not last long. The guardianship of the eunuch was in his view a guaranty of her personal safety. In the next place, acquaintance with the Princess might prove serviceable in the future. He believed Lael fitted for the highest rank; she was already educated beyond the requirements of the age for women; her beauty was indisputable; as a consequence, he had thought of her a light in the court; and not unpleasantly it occurred to him now that the fair Princess might carry keys for both the inner and outer doors of the royal residence.

Generally the affair which was of concern to Lael was an affair of absorbing interest to the Prince; in this instance, however, another theme offered itself for the moment a superior attraction.

The impression left by the young master of ceremonies in the reception at the landing was of a kind to arouse curiosity. His appearance, manner, speech and the homage paid him denoted exalted rank; while the confidence with which he spoke for Sultan Amurath was most remarkable. His acceptance of the terms presented by the Princess Irene was little short of downright treaty–making; and what common official dared carry assumption to such a height? Finally the Prince fell to thinking if there was any person the actual governor of the Castle would quietly permit to go masquerading in his authority and title.

Then everything pointed him to Prince Mahommed. The correspondence in age was perfect; the martial array seen galloping down the bank was a

fitting escort for the heir–apparent of the gray Sultan; and he alone might with propriety speak for his father in a matter of state.

"A mistake cannot be serious," said the Prince to himself, at the end of the review. "I will proceed upon the theory that the young man is Prince Mahommed."

This was no sooner determined than the restless mind flew forward to an audience. The time and place—midnight in the lonesome old Castle—were propitious, and he was prepared for it.

Indeed it was the very purpose he had in view the night of the repast in his tent at El Zaribah where he so mysteriously intrusted the Emir Mirza with revelations concerning the doom of Constantinople.

Once more he ran over the scheme which had brought him from Cipango. If Islam could not be brought to lead in the project, Christendom might be more amenable to reason. The Moslem world was to be reached through the Kaliph whom he expected to find in Egypt; wherefore his contemplated trip down the Nile from Kash–Cush. If driven to the Christian, Constantine was to be his operator. Such in broadest generality was the plan of execution he had resolved upon.

But to these possibilities he had appended another of which it is now necessary to speak.

Enough has been given to apprise the reader of the things to which the Prince preferably devoted himself. These were international affairs, and transcendently war. If indeed the latter were not the object he had always specially in mind, it was the end to which his management usually conducted. For mere enjoyment in the sight of men facing the death which strangely passed him by, he delighted in hovering on the edge of battle until there was a crisis, and then plunging into its heated heart.

He had also a peculiar method of bringing war about. This consisted in providing for punishments in case his enterprises miscarried. Invariably somebody suffered for such failures. In that way he soothed the pangs of wounded vanity.

When he was inventing the means for executing his plots, and forming the relations essential to them, it was his habit to select instruments of punishment in advance.

Probably no better illustration of this feature of his dealings can be given than is furnished by the affair now engaging him. If he failed to move the Kaliph to lead the reform, he would resort to Constantine; if the Emperor also declined, he would make him pay the penalty; then came the reservation. So soon after his arrival from Cipango as he could inform himself of the political conditions of the world to which he was returning, he fixed upon Mahommed to avenge him upon the offending Greek.

The meeting with Mirza at El Zaribah was a favorable opportunity to begin operating upon the young Turk. The tale the Emir received that night under solemn injunctions of secrecy was really intended for his master. How well it was devised for the end in view the reader will be able to judge from what is now to follow.

The audience with Mahommed determined upon by the Prince of India, our first point of interest is in observing how he set about accomplishing it. His promptness was characteristic.

Directly the ladies had disappeared with the eunuch, the soldiers poured from their hiding places in the Castle, and seeing one whom he judged an officer, the Prince called to him in Turkish:

"Ho, my friend!"

The man was obliging.

"Present my salutations to the Governor of the Castle, and say the Prince of India desires speech with him."

The soldier hesitated.

"Understand," said the Prince, quickly, "my message is not to the great Lord who received me at the landing. But the Governor in fact. Bring him here."

The confident manner prevailed.

Presently the messenger returned with a burly, middle–aged person in guidance. A green turban above a round face, large black eyes in muffling

of fleshy lids, pallid cheeks lost in dense beard, a drab gown lined with yellow fur, a naked cimeter in a silk–embroidered sash, bespoke the Turk; but how unlike the handsome, fateful–looking masquerader at the river side!

"The Prince of India has the honor of speech with the Governor of the Castle?"

"God be praised," the Governor replied. "I was seeking your Highness. Besides wishing to join in your thanks for happy deliverance from the storm, I thought to discharge my duty as a Moslem host by conducting you to refreshments and repose. Follow me, I pray."

A few steps on the way, the Governor stopped:

"Was there not a companion—a younger man—a Dervish?"

"A monk," said the Prince; "and the question reminds me of my attendant, a negro. Send for him—or better, bring them both to me. I wish them to share my apartment."

In a short time the three were in quarters, if one small room may be so dignified. The walls were cold gray stone; one oblong narrow port–hole admitted scanty light; a rough bench, an immense kettle–drum shaped like the half of an egg–shell, and propped broadside up, some piles of loose straw, each with folded sheepskins on it, constituted the furnishment.

Sergius made no sign of surprise or disappointment. Possibly the chamber and its contents were reproductions of his cell up in Bielo–Osero. Nilo gave himself to study of the drum, reminded, doubtless, of similar warlike devices in Kash–Cush. The Prince alone expostulated. Taking a stand between the Governor and the door, he said:

"A question before thou goest hence."

The Turk gazed at him silently.

"To what accommodations have the Princess Irene and her attendant been taken? Are they vile as these?"

"The reception room of my harem is the most comfortable the Castle affords," the Governor answered.

"And they?"

"They are occupying it."

"Not by courtesy of thine. He who could put the hospitality of the Prince Mahommed to shame by maltreating one of his guests."

He paused, and grimly surveyed the room.

"Such a servant would be as evil–minded to another guest; and that the other is a woman, would not affect his imbruited soul."

"The Prince Mahommed!" the Governor exclaimed.

"Yes. What brings him here, matters not; his wish to keep the Romans in ignorance of his near presence, I know as well as thou; none the less, it was his royal word we accepted. As for thee—thou mightest have promised faith and hospitality with thy hand on the Prophet's beard, yet would I have bidden the Princess trust herself to the tempest sooner."

Sergius was now standing by, but the conversation being in Turkish, he listened without understanding.

"Thou ass!" the Prince continued. "Not to know that the kinswoman of the Roman Emperor, under this roof by treaty with the mighty Amurath, his son the negotiator, is our guardian! When the storm shall have spent itself, and the waters quieted down, she will resume her journey. Then—it may be in the morning—she will first ask for us, and then thy master will require to know how we have passed the night. Ah, thou beginnest to see!"

The Governor's head was drooping; his hands crossed themselves upon his stomach; and when he raised his eyes, they were full of deprecation and entreaty.

"Your Highness—most noble Lord—condescend to hear me."

"Speak. I am awake to hear the falsehood thou hast invented in excuse of thy perfidy to us, and thy treason to him, the most generous of masters, the most chivalrous of knights."

"Your Highness has greatly misconceived me. In the first place you have forgotten the crowded state of the Castle. Every room and passage is filled with the suite and escort of"—

He hesitated, and turned pale, like a man dropped suddenly into a great danger. The shrewd guest caught at the broken sentence and finished it:

"Of Prince Mahommed!"

"With the suite and escort," the Governor repeated… "In the next place, it was not my intention to leave you unprovided. From my own apartments, light, beds and seats were ordered to be brought here, with meats for refreshment, and water for cleansing and draught. The order is in course of execution now. Indeed, your Highness, I swear by the first chapter of the Koran"—

"Take something less holy to swear by," cried the Prince.

"Then, by the bones of the Faithful, I swear I meant to make you comfortable, even to my own deprivation."

"By thy young master's bidding?"

The Governor bent forward very low.

"Well," said the Prince, softening his manner—"the misconception was natural."

"Yes—yes."

"And now thou hast only to prove thy intention by making it good."

"Trust me, your Highness."

"Trust thee? Ay, on proof. I have a commission"—

The Prince then drew a ring from his finger.

"Take this," he said, "and deliver it to the Emir Mirza."

The assurance of the speech was irresistible; so the Turk held out his hand to receive the token.

"And say to the Emir, that I desire him to thank the Most Compassionate and Merciful for the salvation of which we were witnesses at the southwest corner of the Kaaba."

"What!" exclaimed the Governor. "Art thou a Moslem?"

"I am not a Christian."

The Governor, accepting the ring, kissed the hand offering it, and took his departure, moving backward, and with downcast eyes, his manner declarative of the most abject humility.

Hardly was the door closed behind the outgoing official, when the Prince began to laugh quietly and rub his hands together—quietly, we say, for the feeling was not merriment so much as self–gratulation.

There was cleverness in having doubted the personality of the individual who received the refugees at the landing; there was greater cleverness in the belief which converted the Governor into the Prince Mahommed; but the play by which the fact was uncovered—if not a stroke of genius, how may it be better described? The Prince of India thought as he laughed:

"Not long now until Amurath joins his fathers, and then—Mahommed."

Presently he stopped, a step half taken, his gaze upon the floor, his hands clasped behind him. He stood so still it would not have been amiss to believe a thought was all the life there was in him. He certainly did believe in astrology. Had not men been always ruled by what they imagined heavenly signs? How distinctly he remembered the age of the oracle and the augur! Upon their going out he became a believer in the stars as prophets, and then an adept; afterwhile he reached a stage when he habitually mistook the commonest natural results, even coincidences, for confirmations of planetary forecasts. And now this halting and breathlessness was from sudden recollection that the horoscope lying on his table in Constantinople had relation to Mahommed in his capacity of Conqueror. How marvellous also that from the meeting with Constantine in the street of the city, he should have been blown by a tempest to a meeting with Mahommed in the White Castle!

These circumstances, trifling to the reader, were of deep influence to the Prince of India. While he stands there rigid as a figure marbleized in mid action, he is saying to himself:

"The audience will take place—Heaven has ordered it. Would I knew what manner of man this Mahommed is!"

He had seen a handsome youth, graceful in bearing, quick and subtle in speech, cultivated and evidently used to governing. Very good, but what an advantage there would be in knowing the bents and inclinations of the royal lad beforehand.

Presently the schemer's head arose. The boyish Prince was going about in armor when soft raiment would be excusable—and that meant ambition, dreams of conquest, dedication to martial glory. Very good indeed! And then his manner under the eyes of the girlish Princess—how quickly her high–born grace had captivated him! Something impossible were he not of a romantic turn, a poet, sentimentalist, knight errant.

The Prince clapped his hands. He knew the appeals effective with such natures. Let the audience come… Ah, but—

Again he sunk into thought. Youths like Mahommed were apt to be wilful. How was he to be controlled? One expedient after another was swiftly considered and as swiftly rejected. At last the right one! Like his ancestors from Ertoghrul down, the young Turk was a believer in the stars. Not unlikely he was then in the Castle by permission of his astrologer. Indeed, if Mirza had repeated the conversation and predictions at El Zaribah, the Prince of India was being waited for with an impatience due a master of the astral craft. Again the Wanderer cried, "Let the audience come!" and peace and confidence were possessing him when a loud report and continuous rumble in the room set the solid floor to quaking. He looked around in time to see the big drum quivering under a blow from Nilo.

From the negro his gaze wandered to Sergius standing before the one loophole by which light and air were let into the dismal chamber; and recalling the monk as the sole attendant of the Princess Irene, he thought it best to speak to him.

Drawing near, he observed the cowl thrown back, and that the face was raised, the eyes closed, the hands palm to palm upon the breast. Involuntarily he stopped, not because he was one of those who always presume the most Holy Presence when prayer is being offered—he stopped, wondering where he had seen that countenance. The delicate features, the pallid complexion, the immature beard, the fair hair parted in the middle, and falling in wavy locks over the shoulders, the aspect manly yet womanly in its refinement, were strangely familiar to him. It was his first view of the monk's face. Where had he seen it? His memory went

back, far back of the recent. A chill struck his heart. The features, look, air, portrait, the expression indefinable except as a light of outcoming spirit, were those of the man he had helped crucify before the Damascus gate in the Holy City, and whom he could no more cast out of mind than he could the bones from his body. His feet seemed rooting into the flinty flags beneath them. He heard the centurion call to him: "Ho, there! If thou knowest the Golgotha, come show it." He felt the sorrowful eyes of the condemned upon him. He struck the bloody cheek, and cried as to a beast: "Go faster, Jesus!" And then the words, wrung from infinite patience at last broken:

"I am going, but do thou TARRY TILL I COME."

For relief, he spoke:

"What dost thou, my friend?"

Sergius opened his eyes and answered simply, "I am praying."

"To whom?"

"To God."

"Art thou a Christian?"

"Yes."

"God is for the Jew and the Moslem."

"Nay," said Sergius, looking at the Prince without taking down his hands, "all who believe in God find happiness and salvation in Him—the Christian as well as the Jew and the Moslem."

The questions had been put with abrupt intensity; now the inquisitor drew back astonished. He heard the very postulate of the scheme to which he was devoting himself—and from a boy so like the dead Christ he was working to blot out of worship he seemed the Christ arisen!

The amazement passed slowly, and with its going the habitual shrewdness and capacity to make servants of circumstances apparently the most untoward returned. The youth had intellect, impressiveness, aptitude in words, and a sublime idea. But what of his spirit—his courage—his endurance in the Faith?

"How came this doctrine to thee?"

The Prince spoke deferentially.

"From the good father Hilarion."

"Who is he?"

"The Archimandrite of Bielo–Osero."

"A monastery?"

"Yes."

"How did he receive it?"

"From the Spirit of God, whence Christ had his wisdom—whence all good men have their goodness—by virtue of which they, like Him, become sons of God."

"What is thy name?"

"Sergius."

"Sergius"—the Prince, now fully recovered, exerted his power of will—"Sergius, thou art a heretic."

At this accusation, so terrible in those days, the monk raised the rosary of large beads dangling from his girdle, kissed the cross, and stood surveying the accuser with pity.

"That is," the Prince continued with greater severity, "speak thou thus to the Patriarch yonder"—he waved a hand toward Constantinople—"dare repeat the saying to a commission appointed to try thee for heresy, and thou wilt thyself taste the pangs of crucifixion or be cast to the beasts."

The monk arose to his great height, and replied, fervently:

"Knowest thou when death hath the sweetness of sleep? I will tell thee"— A light certainly not from the narrow aperture in the wall collected upon his countenance, and shone visibly—"It is when a martyr dies knowing both of God's hands are a pillow under his head."

The Prince dropped his eyes, for he was asking himself, was such sweetness of sleep appointed for him? Resuming his natural manner, he said: "I understand thee, Sergius. Probably no man in the world, go thou

East or West, will ever understand thee better. God's hands under my head, welcome death!—Let us be friends."

Sergius took his offered hand.

Just then there was a noise at the door, and a troop of servants entered with lighted lamps, rugs, a table, stools, and beds and bedding, and it was not long until the apartment was made habitable. The Prince, otherwise well satisfied, wanted nothing then but a reply from Mirza; and in the midst of his wonder at the latter's delay, a page in brilliant costume appeared, and called out:

"The Emir Mirza!"

CHAPTER XII

THE RING RETURNS

The Prince, at the announcement of Mirza, took position near the centre of the room where the light was ample. His black velvet pelisse contrasting strongly with his white hair and beard, he looked a mysterious Indian potentate to whom occult Nature was a familiar, and the stars oracular friends.

Mirza's cheeks were scarcely so sun and sand stained as when we first beheld him in conduct of the caravan to Mecca; in other respects he was unchanged. His attire, like the lord Mahommed's at the reception on the landing, was of chain mail very light and flexible. He carried a dagger in his belt, and to further signify confidence in the Prince, the flat steel cap forming his headgear was swinging loosely from his left arm; or he might have intended to help his friend to a more ready recognition by presenting himself bareheaded. He met his survey with unaffected pleasure, took the hand extended in greeting, and kissed it reverentially.

"Forgive me, O Prince, if my first greeting have the appearance of a reproach," Mirza said, as he gave up the hand. "Why have you kept us waiting so long?"

The Prince's countenance assumed a severe expression.

"Emir, I gave you confidence under seal."

The Emir flushed deeply.

"Was it knightly to betray me? To whom have you told the secret? How many have been waiting for my coming?"

"Be merciful, I pray."

"But the stars. You have made me culprit with them. I may pardon you; can you assure me of their pardon?"

The Emir raised his head, and with an expostulatory gesture, was about to reply, when the Prince continued, "Put thy words in the tongue coinage of Italy, for to be overheard now were to make me an offender like unto thyself."

Mirza glanced hastily at Sergius, still praying before the loophole, and at Nilo; then he surveyed the cell critically, and said, in Italian, "This is the prison of the Castle—and thou—can it be I see thee a prisoner?"

The Prince smiled. "The Governor led me here with my friends; and what you behold of accommodations he sent in afterwards, saying the better rooms were filled with soldiery."

"He will rue the deed. My Lord is swift at righting a wrong, and trust me, O Prince, to make report. But to return"—Mirza paused, and looked into the Prince's eyes earnestly—"Is your accusation just? Hear me; then by the motive judge. When I stood before my master, Prince Mahommed, a returned pilgrim, if not taller in fact, his bearing was more majestic. I kissed his hand wondering if some servant of the Compassionate, some angel or travelling Jinn, had not arrived before me, and whispered him of what you told me, speaking for the stars. And when we were alone, he would have account of the countries journeyed through, of the people met, of Medina and Mecca, and the other holy places; nor would he rest until he had from me the sayings I had heard on the way, everything from calls to prayer to the Khatib's sermon. When I told him I had not heard the sermon, nor seen the preacher or his camel, he demanded why, and—what else was there to do, O Prince?—I related how we had been pursued by the terrible Yellow Air; how it had overtaken me; how I fell down dying at the corner of the Kaaba, and by whom I was saved even as the life was departing. This last directed him to you. My efforts to put him off but whetted his desire. He would not be diverted or denied. He insisted—urged—threatened. At last I told him all—of your joining us with the Hajj from El Khatif—your rank and train—your marches in the rear—the hundreds of miserables you saved from the plague—of our meeting at Zaribah, your hospitality, your learning in all that pertains to the greatest of the prophets, your wisdom above the wisdom of other men. And you

grew upon him as I proceeded. 'Oh, a good man truly!' 'What courage!' 'What charity!' 'The Prophet himself!' 'Oh, that I had been you!' 'O foolish Mirza, to suffer such a man to escape!' With such exclamations he kept breaking up my story. It was not long until he fastened upon our meeting in the tent. He plied me to know of what we talked—what you said, and all you said. O Prince, if you did but know him; if you knew the soul possessing him, the intellectual things he has mastered, his sagacity, his art, his will, his day–dreams pursuing him in sleep, the deeds he is prepared to do, the depth and strength of his passions, his admiration for heroes, his resolve to ring the world with the greatness of his name—Oh, knew you the man as I do, were you his lover as I am, his confidant—had you, for teaching him to ride and strike with sword and spear, his promise of a share in the glory beckoning him on, making his mighty expectations a part of you even as they are of him, would you —ah, Prince, could you have withheld the secret? Think of the revelation! The old East to awake, and march against the West! Constantinople doomed! And he the leader for whom the opportunity is waiting! And to call my weakness betrayal! Unsay it, unsay it, Prince!"

The face of the auditor as Mirza proceeded with his defence would have been a profitable study. He saw himself succeeding in the purpose of his affected severity; he was drawing from Mahommed's intimate the information he most desired; and thus advised in advance, his role in the interview coming would be of easy foresight and performance. Not to appear too lightly satisfied, however, he said gravely, "I see the strain you underwent, my gallant friend. I see also the earnestness of your affection for your most noble pupil. He is to be congratulated upon the possession of a servant capable of such discernment and devotion. But I recall my question—How many are there waiting for me?"

"Your revelations, O Prince, were imparted to my master alone; and with such certainty as you know yourself, you may believe them at rest in his bosom. No one better than he appreciates the importance of keeping them there under triple lock. More than one defeat—I think he would permit the confession—has taught him that secrecy is the life of every enterprise."

"Say you so, Emir? I feel warmth returning to my hope. Nay, listening to you, and not believing in improvised heroes, I see how your course may have been for the best. The years gone since you yielded to his importunities, wisely used, have doubtless served him providentially."

The Prince extended his hand again, and it was ardently taken; then, on his part, more than pleased, Mirza said, "I bring you a message from my Lord Mahommed. I was with him when the Governor came and delivered your ring to me—and, lest I forget a duty, Prince, here it is—take it at some future time it may be serviceable as today."

"Yes, well thought!" the Jew exclaimed, replacing the signet on his finger, and immediately, while looking at the turquoise eye, he dropped his tone into the solemn, "Ay, the obligations of the Pentagram endure—they are like a decree of God."

The words and manner greatly impressed Mirza.

"My Lord Mahommed," he said, "observed the delivery of the ring to me by the Governor; and when we were alone, and I had recounted the story of the jewels, 'What!' my Lord cried, quite as transported as myself. 'That wonderful man—he here—here in this Castle! He shall not escape me. Send for him at once. I brook no delay.' He stamped his foot. 'Lest he vanish in the storm—go!' When I was at the door, he bade me come back. 'The elder man with the white beard and black eyes, said you? It were well for me to begin by consulting his comfort. He may be tired, and in want of repose; his accommodations may be insufficient; wherefore go see him first, and ascertain his state and wishes.' And as I was going, he summoned me to return again. 'A moment—stay!' he said.'The circumstance enlarges with thought. Thou knowest, Mirza, I did not come here with a special object; I was drawn involuntarily; now I see it was to meet him. It is a doing of the stars. I shall hear from them!' O Prince"—Mirza's eyes sparkled, arid he threw up both his hands—"if ever man believed what he said, my master did."

"A wise master truly," said the Jew, struggling with his exultation. "What said he next?"

"'While I am honoring their messenger'—thus my Lord continued—'why not honor the stars? Their hour is midnight, for then they are all out, from this horizon and that calling unto each other, and merging their influences into the harmony the preachers call the Will of the Most Merciful. A good hour for the meeting. Hear, Mirza—at midnight—in this room. Go now.' And so it is appointed."

"And well appointed, Emir."

"Shall I so report?"

"With my most dutiful protestations."

"Look for me then at midnight."

"I shall be awake, and ready."

"Meantime, Prince, I will seek an apartment more in correspondence with the degree of my Lord's most honored guest."

"Nay, good Mirza, suffer me to advise in that matter. The bringing me into this place was a mistake of the Governor's. He could not divine the merit I have in your master's eyes. He took me for a Christian. I forgive him, and pray he may not be disturbed. He may be useful to me. Upon the springing of a mischance—there is one such this instant in my mind's eye—I may be driven to come back to this Castle. In such an event, I prefer him my servant rather than my enemy."

"O Prince!"

"Nay, Emir, the idea is only a suggestion of one of the Prophets whom Allah stations at the turns in every man's career."

"But every man cannot see the Prophets."

The Jew finished gravely: "Rather than disturb the Governor further, soothe him for me; and when the Lord Mahommed goes hence, do thou see an instruction is left putting the Castle and its chief at my order. Also, as thou art a grateful friend, Mirza, serve me by looking into the kettles out of which we are to have our refreshment, and order concerning them as for thyself. I feel a stir of appetite."

The Emir backed from the apartment, leaving a low salaam just outside the door.

If the reader thinks the Prince content now, he is not mistaken. True he paced the floor long and rapidly; but, feeling himself close upon a turn in his course, he was making ready for it perfectly as possible by consulting the Prophet whom he saw waiting there.

And as the Lord Mahommed failed not to remember them what time he betook himself to supper, the three guests up in the prison fared well, nor cared for the howling of the wind, and the bursting and beating of the rain still rioting without the walls.

CHAPTER XIII

MAHOMMED HEARS FROM THE STARS

The second recall of the Emir Mirza departing with the appointment for the Prince of India was remarkable, considering Mahommed's usual quickness of conclusion and steadiness of purpose; and the accounting for it is noteworthy.

So completely had the young Turk been taken up by study and military service that leisure for love had been denied him; else he either despised the passion or had never met a woman to catch his fancy and hold it seriously.

We have seen him make the White Castle by hard galloping before the bursting of the storm. While at the gate, and in the midst of his reception there, the boats were reported making all speed to the river landing; and not wishing his presence at the Castle to be known in Constantinople, he despatched an under officer to seize the voyagers, and detain them until he had crossed the Bosphorus *en route* to Adrianople. However, directly the officer brought back the spirited message of the Princess Irene to the Governor of the Castle, his mind underwent a change.

"What," he asked, "sayst thou the woman is akin to the Emperor Constantine?"

"Such is her claim, my Lord, and she looks it."

"Is she old?"

"Young, my Lord—not more than twenty."

Mahommed addressed the Governor:

"Stay thou here. I will take thy office, and wait upon this Princess."

Dismounting, then, in the capacity of Governor of the Castle, he hastened to the landing, curious as well as desirous of offering refuge to the noble lady.

He saw her first a short way off, and was struck with her composed demeanor. During the discussion of his tender of hospitality, her face was in fair view, and it astonished him. When finally she stepped from the boat, her form, delicately observable under the rich and graceful drapery, and so exquisitely in correspondence with her face, still further charmed him.

Before the chairs were raised, he sent a messenger to the Castle with orders to place everybody in hiding, and for his Kislar–Aga, or chief eunuch, to be in the passage of entrance to receive and take charge of the kinswoman of the Emperor and her attendant. By a further order the Governor proper was directed to vacate his harem apartments for her accommodation.

In the Castle, after the Princess had been thus disposed of, the impression she made upon him increased.

"She is so high–born!—so beautiful!—She has such spirit and mind!—She is so calm under trial—so courageous—so decorous—so used to courtly life!"

Such exclamations attested the unwonted ferment going on in his mind. Gradually, as tints under the brush of a skilful painter lose themselves in one effect, his undefined ideas took form.

"O Allah! What a Sultana for a hero!"

And by repetition this ran on into what may be termed the chorus of a love song—the very first of the kind his soul had ever sung.

Such was Mahommed's state when Mirza received the turquoise ring, and, announcing the Prince of India, asked for orders. Was it strange he changed his mind? Indeed he was at the moment determining to see again the woman who had risen upon him like a moon above a lake; so, directly he had despatched the Emir to the Prince of India with the appointment for midnight, he sent for an Arab Sheik of his suite, arrayed himself in the latter's best habit, and stained his hands, neck, and face–turned himself, in brief, into the story–teller whom we have seen admitted to amuse the Princess Irene.

At midnight, sharply as the hour could be determined by the uncertain appliances resorted to by the inmates of the Castle, Mirza appeared at his master's door with the mystical Indian, and, passing the sentinel there, knocked like one knowing himself impatiently awaited. A voice bade them enter.

The young Turk, upon their entrance, arose from a couch of many cushions prepared for him under a canopy in the centre of the room.

"This, my Lord, is the Prince of India" said Mirza; then, almost without pause, he turned to the supposed Indian, and added more ceremoniously: "Be thou happy, O Prince! The East hath not borne a son so worthy to take the flower from the tomb of Saladin, and wear it, as my master here —the Lord Mahommed."

Then, his duty done, the Emir retired.

Mahommed was in the garb used indoors immemorially by his race—sharply pointed slippers, immense trousers gathered at the ankles, a yellow quilted gown dropping below the knees, and a turban of balloon shape, its interfolding stayed by an aigrette of gold and diamonds. His head was shaven up to the edge of the turban, so that, the light falling from a cluster of lamps in suspension from the ceiling, every feature was in plain exposure. Looking into the black eyes scarcely shaded by the upraised arching brows, the Prince of India saw them sparkle with invitation and pleasure, and was himself satisfied.

He advanced, and saluted by falling upon his knees, and kissing the back of his hands laid palm downward on the floor. Mahommed raised him to his feet.

"Rise, O Prince!" he said—"rise, and come sit with me."

From behind the couch, the Turk dragged a chair of ample seat, railed around except at the front, and provided with a cushion of camel's hair—a chair such as teachers in the Mosques use when expounding to their classes. This he placed so while he sat on the couch the visitor would be directly before him, and but little removed. Soon the two were sitting cross–legged face to face.

"A man devout as the Prince of India is reported to me," Mahommed began, in a voice admirably seconding the respectful look he fixed upon the other, "must be of the rightly guided, who believe in God and the Last Day, and observe prayer, and pay the alms, and dread none but God—who therefore of right frequent the temples."

"Your words, my Lord, are those of the veritable messenger of the most high Heaven," the Wanderer responded, bending forward as if about to perform a prostration. "I recognize them, and they give me the sensation of being in a garden of perpetual abode, with a river running beneath it." Mahommed, perceiving the quotation from the Koran, bent low in turn, saying: "It is good to hear you, for as I listen I say to myself, This one is of the servants of the Merciful who are to walk upon the earth softly. I accost you in advance, Welcome and Peace."

After a short silence, he continued: "A frequenter of mosques, you will see, O Prince, I have put you in the teacher's place. I am the student. Yours to open the book and read; mine to catch the pearls of your saying, lest they fall in the dust, and be lost."

"I fear my Lord does me honor overmuch; yet there is a beauty in willingness even where one cannot meet expectation. Of what am I to speak?"

Mahommed knit his brows, and asked imperiously, "Who art thou? Of that tell me first."

Happily for the Prince, he had anticipated this demand, and, being intensely watchful, was ready for it, and able to reply without blenching: "The Emir introduced me rightly. I am a Prince of India."

"Now of thy life something."

"My Lord's request is general—perhaps he framed it with design. Left thus to my own judgment, I will be brief, and choose from the mass of my life."

There was not the slightest sign of discomposure discernible in the look or tone of the speaker; his air was more than obliging—he seemed to be responding to a compliment.

"I began walk as a priest—a disciple of Siddhartha, whom my Lord, of his great intelligence, will remember as born in Central India. Very early, on account of my skill in translation, I was called to China, and there put to rendering the Thirty–five Discourses of the father of the Budhisattwa into Chinese and Thibettan. I also published a version of the Lotus of the Good Law, and another of the Nirvana. These brought me a great honor. To an ancestor of mine, Maha Kashiapa, Buddha happened to have intrusted his innermost mysteries—that is, he made him Keeper of the Pure Secret of the Eye of Right Doctrine. Behold the symbol of that doctrine."

The Prince drew a leaf of ivory, worn and yellow, from a pocket under his pelisse, and passed it to Mahommed, saying, "Will my lord look?"

Mahommed took the leaf, and in the silver sunk into it saw this sign:

[Illustration]

"I see," he said, gravely. "Give me its meaning."

"Nay, my Lord, did I that, the doctrine of which, as successor of Kashiapa, though far removed, they made me Keeper—the very highest of Buddhistic honors—would then be no longer a secret. The symbol is of vast sanctity. There is never a genuine image of Buddha without it over his heart. It is the monogram of Vishnu and Siva; but as to its meaning, I can only say every Brahman of learning views it worshipfully, knowing it the compression of the whole mind of Buddha."

Mahommed respected the narrator's compunction, and returned the symbol, saying simply, "I have heard of such things."

"To pursue," the Prince then said, confident of the impression he was producing: "At length I returned to my own country enriched beyond every hope. A disposition to travel seized me. One day, passing the desert to Baalbec, some Bedouin made me prisoner, and carrying me to Mecca, sold me to the Scherif there; a good man who respected my misfortune and learning—may the youths ever going in Paradise forget not his cup of flowing wine!—and wrought with me over the Book of the One God until I became a believer like himself. Then, as I had exchanged the hope of Nirvana for the better and surer hope of Islam, he set me free… Again in my native land, I betook myself to astrologic studies, being the more

inclined thereto by reason of the years I had spent in contemplating the abstrusities of Siddhartha. I became an adept—something, as my Lord may already know, impossible to such as go about unknowing the whole earth and heavens, and the powers superior, those of the sky, and those lesser, meaning Kings, Emperors, and Sultans."

"How!" exclaimed Mahommed. "Is not every astrologer an adept?"

The Prince answered softly, seeing the drift was toward the professor in the young Turk's service. "There is always a better until we reach the best. Even the stars differ from each other in degree."

"But how may a man know the superior powers?"

"The sum of the observations kept by the wise through the ages, and recorded by them, is a legacy for the benefit of the chosen few. Had my Lord the taste, and were he not already devoted by destiny, I could take him to a college where what is now so curious to him is simple reading."

The hard and doubting expression on Mahommed's face began to soften, yet he persisted: "Knowing the superior, why is it needful to know the inferior powers?"

"My Lord trenches now upon the forbidden, yet I will answer as his shrewdness deserves. Never man heard from the stars in direct speech—that were almost like words with God. But as they are servants, they also have servants. Moreover what we have from them is always in answer. They love to be sought after by the diligent. Some ages ago an adept seeking this and that of them conjecturally, had reply, 'Lo! A tribe of poor wanderers in the East. Heed them, for they shall house their dominion in palaces now the glory of the West, and they shall dig the pit to compass the fall of the proud.' Is it this tribe? Is it that? But the seeker never knew. The children of Ertoghrul were yet following their herds up and down the pastures they had from Ala–ed–din, the Iconian. Not knowing their name, he could not ask of them from the decree–makers?"

The Mystic beheld the blood redden Mahommed's open countenance, and the brightening of his eyes; and as he was speaking to his pride, he knew he was not amiss.

"The saying of the stars," he went on, "descended to succeeding adepts. Time came to their aid. When at length your fathers seated themselves in Broussa, the mystery was in part revealed. Anybody, even the low–browed herdsman shivering in the currents blowing from the Trojan heights, could then have named the fortunate tribe. Still the exposure was not complete; a part remained for finding out. We knew the diggers of the pit; but for whom was it? To this I devoted myself. Hear me closely now—my Lord, I have traversed the earth, not once, but many times—so often, you cannot name a people unknown to me, nor a land whither I have not been—no, nor an island. As the grandson of Abd–el–Muttalib was a Messenger of God, I am a Messenger of the Predicting Stars—not their prophet, only their Interpreter and Messenger. The business of the stars is my business." Mahommed's lips moved, and it was with an effort he kept silent.

The Prince proceeded, apparently unconscious of the interest he was exciting: "Here and there while I travelled, I kept communication with the planets; and though I had many of their predictions to solve, I asked them oftenest after the unnamed proud one for whom thy Ottomanites were charged to dig a pit. I presented names without number—names of persons, names of peoples, and lest one should he overlooked, I kept a record of royal and notable families. Was a man–child horn to any of them, I wrote down the minute of the hour of his birth, and how he was called. By visitations, I kept informed of the various countries, their conditions, and their relations with each other; for as the state of the earth points favorably or unfavorably to its vegetation, so do the conditions of nations indicate the approach of changes, and give encouragement to those predestined to bring the changes about. Again I say, my Lord, as the stars are the servants of God, they have their servants, whom you shall never know except as you are able to read the signs their times offer you for reading. Moreover the servants are sometimes priests, sometimes soldiers, sometimes kings; among them have been women, and men of common origin; for the seed of genius falls directly from God's hand, and He chooses the time and field for the sowing; but whether high or low, white or black, good or bad, how shall a Messenger interpret truly for the stars

except by going before their elect, and introducing them, and making their paths smooth? Must he not know them first?"

A mighty impulsion here struck Mahommed. Recurring rather to what he had heard from Mirza of the revelation dropped by the strange person met by him during the pilgrimage, he felt himself about to be declared of the elect, and unable to control his eagerness, he asked abruptly:

"Knowest thou me, O Prince?"

The manner of the Mystic underwent a change. He had been deferential, even submissive; seldom a teacher so amiable and unmasterful; now he concentrated his power of spirit, and shot it a continuing flash from his large eyes.

"Know thee, Lord Mahommed?" he answered, in a low voice, but clear and searching, and best suited to the conflict he was ushering in—the conflict of spirit and spirit. "Thou knowest not thyself as well."

Mahommed shrank perceptibly—he was astonished.

"I mean not reference to thy father—nor to the Christian Princess, thy mother,—nor to thy history, which is of an obedient son and brave soldier, —nor to thy education, unusual in those born inheritors of royal power—I mean none of these, for they are in mouths everywhere, even of the beggars nursing their sores by the waysides… In thy father's palace there was a commotion one night—thou wert about to be born. A gold–faced clock stood in the birth chamber, the gift of a German King, and from the door of the chamber eunuchs were stationed. Exactly as the clock proclaimed midnight, mouth and mouth carried the cry to a man on the roof—'A Prince is born! A Prince is born! Praised be Allah!' He on the roof was seated at a table studying a paper with the signs of the Zodiac in the usual formulary of a nativity. At the coming of the cry, he arose, and observed the heavens intently; then he shouted, 'There is no God but God! Lo, Mars, Lord of the Ascendant—Mars, with his friends, Saturn, Venus, and Jupiter in happy configuration, and the moon nowhere visible. Hail the Prince!' And while his answer was passing below, the man on the roof marked the planets in their Houses exactly as they were that midnight

between Monday and Tuesday in the year 1430. Have I in aught erred, my lord?"

"In nothing, O Prince."

"Then I proceed… The nativity came to me, and I cast and recast it for the aspects, familiarities, parallels and triplicities of the hour, and always with the same result. I found the sun, the angles and the quality of the ambient signs favorable to a career which, when run, is to leave the East radiant with the glory of an unsetting sun."

Here the Jew paused, and bowed—"Now doth my Lord doubt if I know him best?"

CHAPTER XIV

DREAMS AND VISIONS

Mahommed sat awhile in deep abstraction, his face flushed, his hands working nervously in their own clasp. The subject possessing him was very pleasurable. How could it be else?

On his side the Prince waited deferentially, but very observant. He was confident of the impression made; he even thought he could follow the young Turk's reflections point by point; still it was wisest to let him alone, for the cooling time of the sober second thought would come, and then how much better if there were room for him to believe the decision his own.

"It is very well, Prince," Mahommed said, finally, struggling to keep down every sign of excitement. "I had accounts of you from Mirza the Emir, and it is the truth, which neither of us will be the worse of knowing, that I see nothing of disagreement in what he told me, and in what you now tell me of yourself. The conceptions I formed of you are justified: you are learned and of great experience; you are a good man given to charity as the Prophet has ordered, and a believer in God. At various times in the world's history, if we may trust the writers, great men have had their greatness foretold them; now if I think myself in the way of addition to the list of those so fortunate, it is because I put faith in you as in a friendly Prophet."

At this the Prince threw up both hands.

"Friendly am I, my lord, more than friendly, but not a Prophet. I am only a Messenger, an Interpreter of the Superior Powers."

Much he feared the demands upon him if he permitted the impression that he was a Prophet to go uncontradicted; as an astrologer, he could in need thrust the stars between him and the unreasonable. And his judgment was quickly affirmed.

"As you will, O Prince," said Mahommed. "Messenger, interpreter, prophet, whichever pleases you, the burden of what you bring me is nevertheless of chiefest account. Comes a herald, we survey him, and ask voucher for his pretensions; are we satisfied with them, why then he gives place in our interest, and becomes secondary to the matter he bears. Is it not so?"

"It is righteously said, my Lord."

"And when I take up this which you have brought me"—Mahommed laid a hand upon his throat as if in aid of the effort he was making to keep calm and talk with dignity—"I cannot deny its power; for when was there an imaginative young man who first permitted ambition and love of glory to build golden palaces for their abiding in his heart, with self–control to stop his ears to promises apparently from Heaven? O Prince, if you are indeed my friend, you will not laugh at me when you are alone!… Moreover I would not you should believe your tidings received carelessly or as a morsel sweet on my tongue; but as wine warms to the blood coursing to the brain, it has started inquiries and anxieties you alone can allay. And first, the great glory whose running is to fill the East, like an unsetting sun, tell me of it; for, as we all know, glory is of various kinds; there is one kind reserved for poets, orators, and professors cunning in the arts, and another for cheer of such as find delight in swords and bossy shields, and armor well bedight, and in horses, and who exult in battle, and in setting armies afield, in changing boundary lines, and in taking rest and giving respite in the citadels of towns happily assaulted. And as of these the regard is various, tell me the kind mine is to be."

"The stars speak not doubtfully, my Lord. When Mars rises ascendant in either of his Houses, they that moment born are devoted to war, and, have they their bent, they shall be soldiers; nor soldiers merely, but as the conjunctions are good, conquerors, and fortunate, and Samael, his angel, becomes their angel. Has my Lord ever seen his nativity?"

"Yes."

"Then he knows whereof I speak."

Mahommed nodded affirmatively, and said, "The fame is to my taste, doubt not; but, Prince, were thy words duly weighed, then my glory is to be surpassing. Now, I am of a line of heroes. Othman, the founder; Orchan, father of the Janissaries; Solyman, who accepted the crescent moon seen in a dream by the sea at Cyzicus as Allah's bidding to pass the Hellespont to Tzympe in Europe; Amurath, conqueror of Adrianople; Bajazet, who put an end to Christian crusading in the field of Nicopolis —these filled the East with their separate renowns; and my father Amurath, did he not subdue Hunyades? Yet, Prince, you tell me my glory is to transcend theirs. Now—because I am ready to believe you—say if it is to burst upon me suddenly or to signalize a long career. The enjoyment of immortality won in youth must be a pleasant thing."

"I cannot answer, my Lord"

"Cannot?"

And Mahommed's eagerness came near getting the better of his will.

"I have nothing from the stars by which to speak, and I dare not assume to reply for myself."

Then Mahommed's eyes became severely bright, and the bones of his hands shone white through the skin, so hard did he compress them.

"How long am I to wait before the glory you promise me ripens ready for gathering? If it requires long campaigns, shall I summon the armies now?"

A tone, a stress of voice in the question sent a shiver through the Prince despite his self–command. His gaze upon Mahommed's countenance, already settled, intensified, and almost before the last word passed he saw the idea he was expected to satisfy, and that it was the point to which his interrogator had been really tending from the commencement of the interview. To gain a moment, he affected not to clearly understand; after a repetition, he in turn asked, with a meaning look:

"Is not thy father, O Prince, now in his eighty–fifth year?"

Mahommed leaned further forward.

"And is it not eight and twenty years since he began reigning wisely and well?"

Mahommed nodded assent.

"Suffer me to answer now. Besides his age which pleads for him, your father has not allowed greatness and power to shade the love he gave you heartily the hour he first took you in his arms. Nature protests against his cutting off, and in this instance, O Prince, the voice of Nature is the voice of Allah. So say I speaking for myself."

Mahommed's face relaxed its hardness, and he moved and breathed freely while replying: "I do not know what the influences require of me."

"Speak you of the stars, my Lord," the other returned, "hear me, and with distinctness. As yet they have intrusted me with the one prediction, and that you have. In other words, they are committed to a horoscope based upon your nativity, and from it your glory has been rightly delivered. So much is permitted us by the astrologic law we practise. But this now asked me, a circumstance in especial, appertains to you as chief of forces not yet yours. Wherefore—heed well, my Lord—I advise you to make note of the minute of the hour of the day you gird yourself with the sword of sovereignty which, at this speaking, is your great father's by sanction of Heaven; then will I cast a horoscope for Mahommed the Sultan, not Mahommed, son of Amurath merely—then, by virtue of my office of Interpreter of the Stars, having the proper writing in my hand, I will tell you this you now seek, together with all else pertaining to your sovereignty intrusted me for communication. I will tell you when the glory is open to you, and the time for setting forward to make it yours—even the dawning of the term of preparation necessarily precedent to the movement itself. Now am I understood? Will my Lord tell me I am understood?"

An observation here may not be amiss. The reader will of course notice the clever obtrusion of the stars in the speech; yet its real craft was in the reservations covered. Presuming it possible for the Prince to have fixed a time to Mahommed's satisfaction, telling it would have been like giving away the meat of an apple, and retaining the rind. The wise man who sets out to make himself a need to another will carefully husband his capital. Moreover it is of importance to keep in mind through this period of our story that with the Prince of India everything was subsidiary to his scheme

of unity in God. To which end it was not enough to be a need to Mahommed; he must also bring the young potentate to wait upon him for the signal to begin the movement against Constantinople; for such in simplicity was the design scarcely concealed under the glozing of "the East against the West." That is to say, until he knew Constantine's disposition with respect to the superlative project, his policy was delay. What, in illustration, if the Emperor proved a friend? In falconry the hawk is carried into the field hooded, and cast off only when the game is flushed. So the Prince of India thought as he concluded his speech, and looked at the handsome face of the Lord Mahommed.

The latter was disappointed, and showed it. He averted his eyes, knit his brows, and took a little time before answering; then a flash of passion seized him.

"With all thy wisdom, Prince, thou knowest not how hard waiting will be. There is nothing in Nature sweeter than glory, and on the other hand nothing so intolerably bitter as hungering for it when it is in open prospect. What irony in the providence which permits us to harvest greatness in the days of our decline! I dream of it for my youth, for then most can be made of it. There was a Greek—not of the Byzantine breed in the imperial kennel yonder"—he emphasized the negative with a contemptuous glance in the direction of Constantinople—"a Greek of the old time of real heroes, he who has the first place in history as a conqueror. Think you he was happy because he owned the world? Delight in property merely, a horse, a palace, a ship, a kingdom, is vulgar: any man can be owner of something; the beggar polishes his crutch for the same reason the king gilds his throne—it belongs to him. Possession means satiety. But achieve thou immortality in thy first manhood, and it shall remain to thee as the ring to a bride or as his bride to the bridegroom.—Let it be as you say. I bow to the stars. Between me and the sovereignty my father stands, a good man to whom I give love for love; and he shall not be disturbed by me or any of mine. In so far I will honor your advice; and in the other matter also, there shall be one ready to note the minute of the hour the succession falls to me. But what if then you are absent?"

"A word from my Lord will bring me to him; and His Majesty is liable to go after his fathers at any moment"—

"Ay, and alas!" Mahommed interposed, with unaffected sorrow, "a king may keep his boundaries clean, and even extend them thitherward from the centre, and be a fear unto men; yet shall death oblige him at last. All is from God."

The Prince was courtier enough to respect the feeling evinced.

"But I interrupted you," Mahommed presently added. "I pray pardon."

"I was about to say, my Lord, if I am not with you when His Majesty, your father, bows to the final call—for the entertainment of such was Paradise set upon its high hill!—let a messenger seek me in Constantinople; and it may even serve well if the Governor of this Castle be instructed to keep his gates always open to me, and himself obedient to my requests."

"A good suggestion! I will attend to it. But"—

Again he lapsed into abstraction, and the Prince held his peace watchfully.

"Prince," Mahommed said at length, "it is not often I put myself at another's bidding, for freedom to go where one pleases is not more to a common man than is freedom to do what pleases him to a sovereign; yet so will I with you in this matter; and as is the custom of Moslems setting out on a voyage I say of our venture, 'In the name of God be its courses and its moorings.' That settled, hearken further. What you have given me is not all comprehensible. As I understand you, I am to find the surpassing glory in a field of war. Tell me, lies the field far or near? Where is it? And who is he I am to challenge? There will be room and occasion for combat around me everywhere, or, if the occasion exist not, my Spahis in a day's ride can make one. There is nothing stranger than how small a cause suffices us to set man against man, life or death. But—and now I come to the very difficulty—looking here and there I cannot see a war new in any respect, either of parties, or objects, or pretence, out of which such a prodigious fame is to be plucked. You discern the darkness in which I am groping. Light, O Prince—give me light!"

For an instant the mind of the Jew, sown with subtlety as a mine with fine ore, was stirred with admiration of the quality so strikingly manifested in this demand; but collecting himself, he said, calmly, for the question had been foreseen:

"My Lord was pleased to say a short while ago that the Emir Mirza, on his return from the Hajj, told him of me. Did Mirza tell also of my forbidding him to say anything of the predictions I then intrusted him?"

"Yes," Mahommed answered, smiling, "and I have loved him for the disobedience. He satisfied me to whom he thought his duty was first owing."

"Well, if evil ensue from the disclosure, it may be justly charged to my indiscretion. Let it pass—only, in reporting me, did not Mirza say, Lord Mahommed, that the prohibition I laid upon him proceeded from a prudent regard for your interests?"

"Yes."

"And in speaking of the change in the status of the world I then announced, and of the refluent wave the East was to pour upon the West"—

"And of the doom of Constantinople!" Mahommed cried, in a sudden transport of excitement.

"Ay, and of the hero thou wert to be, my Lord! Said he nothing of the other caution I gave him, how absolute verity could only be had by a recast of the horoscope at the city itself? And how I was even then on my way thither?"

"Truly, O Prince. Mirza is a marvel!"

"Thanks, my Lord. The assurance prepares me to answer your last demand."

Then, lowering his voice, the Prince returned to his ordinary manner.

"The glory you are to look for will not depend upon conditions such as parties to the war, or its immediate cause, or the place of its wagement."

Mahommed listened with open mouth.

"My Lord knows of the dispute long in progress between the Pope of Rome and the Patriarch of Constantinople; one claiming to be the head of the Church of Christ, the other insisting on his equality. The dispute, my Lord also knows, has been carried from East to West, and back and back again, prelate replying to prelate, until the whole Church is falling to pieces, and on every Christian tongue the 'Church East' and the 'Church West' are common as morning salutations."

Mahommed nodded.

"Now, my Lord," the Prince continued, the magnetic eyes intensely bright, "you and I know the capital of Christianity is yonder"—he pointed toward Constantinople—"and that conquering it is taking from Christ and giving to Mahomet. What more of definition of thy glory wilt thou require? Thus early I salute thee a Sword of God."

Mahommed sprang from his couch, and strode the floor, frequently clapping his hands. Upon the passing of the ecstasy, he stopped in front of the Prince.

"I see it now—the feat of arms impossible to my father reserved for me."

Again he walked, clapping his hands.

"I pray your pardon," he said, when the fit was over. "In my great joy I interrupted you."

"I regret to try my Lord's patience further," the Prince answered, with admirable diplomacy. "It were better, however, to take another step in the explanation now. A few months after separating from Mirza in Mecca, I arrived in Constantinople, and every night since, the heavens being clear, I have questioned the stars early and late. I cannot repeat to my Lord all the inquiries I made of them, so many were they, and so varied in form, nor the bases I laid hold of for horoscopes, each having, as I hoped, to do with the date of the founding of the city. What calculations I have made—tables of figures to cover the sky with a tapestry of algebraic and geometrical symbols: The walks of astrology are well known —I mean those legitimate—nevertheless in my great anxiety, I have even ventured into the arcana of magic forbidden to the Faithful. The seven good angels, and the seven bad, beginning with Jubanladace, first of the good, a celestial

messenger, helmeted, sworded with flame, and otherwise beautiful to behold, and ending with Barman, the lowest of the bad, the consort and ally of witches—I besought them all for what they could tell me. Is the time of the running of the city now, to–morrow, next week— when? Such the burden of my inquiry. As yet, my Lord, no answer has been given. I am merely bid keep watch on the schism of the Church. In some way the end we hope has connection with that rancor, if, indeed, it be not the grand result. With clear discernment of the tendencies, the Roman Pontiff is striving to lay the quarrel; but he speaks to a rising tide. We cannot hasten the event; neither can he delay it. Our role is patience—patience. At last Europe will fall away, and leave the Greek to care of himself; then, my Lord, you have but to be ready. The end is in the throes of its beginning now."

"Still you leave me in the dark," Mahommed cried, with a frown.

"Nay, my Lord, there is a chance for us to make the stars speak."

The beguiler appeared to hesitate.

"A chance?" Mahommed asked.

"It is dependent, my Lord."

"Upon what?"

"The life of the Sultan, thy father."

"Speak not in riddles, O Prince."

"Upon his death, thou wilt enter on the sovereignty."

"Still I see not clearly."

"With the horoscope of Mahommed the Sultan in my hand, then certainly as the stars perform their circuits, being set thereunto from the first morning, they must respond to me; and then, find I Mars in the Ascendant, well dignified essentially and accidentally, I can lead my Lord out of the darkness."

"Then, Prince?"

"He may see the Christian capital at his mercy."

"But if Mars be not in the Ascendant?"

"My Lord must wait."

Mahommed sprang to his feet, gnashing his teeth.

"My Lord," said the Prince, calmly, "a man's destiny is never unalterable; it is like a pitcher filled with wine which he is carrying to his lips—it may be broken on the way, and its contents spilled. Such has often happened through impatience and pride. What is waiting but the wise man's hour of preparation?"

The quiet manner helped the sound philosophy. Mahommed took seat, remarking, "You remind me, Prince, of the saying of the Koran, 'Whatsoever good betideth thee, O man, it is from God, and whatsoever evil betideth, from thyself is it.' I am satisfied. Only"—

The Prince summoned all his faculties again.

"Only I see two periods of waiting before me; one from this until I take up the sovereignty; the other thence till thou bringest me the mandate of the stars. I fear not the second period, for, as thou sayest, I can then lose myself in making ready; but the first, the meantime—ah, Prince, speak of it. Tell me how I can find surcease of the chafing of my spirit."

The comprehension of the wily Hebrew did not fail him. His heart beat violently. He was master! Once more he was in position to change the world. A word though not more than "now," and he could marshal the East, which he so loved, against the West, which he so hated. If Constantinople failed him, Christianity must yield its seat to Islam. He saw it all flash–like; yet at no time in the interview did his face betoken such placidity of feeling. The *meantime* was his, not Mahommed's—his to lengthen or shorten—his for preparation. He could afford to be placid.

"There is much for my Lord to do," he said.

"When, O Prince—now?"

"It is for him to think and act as if Constantinople were his capital temporarily in possession of another."

The words caught attention, and it is hard saying what Mahommed's countenance betokened. The reader must think of him as of a listener just awakened to a new idea of infinite personal concern.

"It is for him now to learn the city within and without," the Jew proceeded; "its streets and edifices; its halls and walls; its strong and weak places; its inhabitants, commerce, foreign relations; the character of its ruler, his resources and policies; its daily events; its cliques and clubs, and religious factions; especially is it for him to foment the differences Latin and Greek."

It is questionable if any of the things imparted had been so effective upon Mahommed as this one. Not only did his last doubt of the man talking disappear; it excited a boundless admiration for him, and the freshest novitiate in human nature knows how almost impossible it is to refuse trust when once we have been brought to admire. "Oh!" Mahommed cried. "A pastime, a pastime, if I could be there!"

"Nay, my Lord," said the insidious counsellor, with a smile, "how do kings manage to be everywhere at the same time?"

"They have their Ambassadors. But I am not a king."

"Not yet a king"—the speaker laid stress upon the adverb—"nevertheless public representation is one thing; secret agency another."

Mahommed's voice sank almost to a whisper.

"Wilt thou accept this agency?"

"It is for me to observe the heavens at night, while calculations will take my days. I trust my Lord in his wisdom will excuse me."

"Where is one for the service? Name him, Prince—one as good."

"There is one better. Bethink you, my Lord, the business is of a long time; it may run through years."

Mahommed's brow knit darkly at the reminder.

"And he who undertakes it should enter Constantinople and live there above suspicion. He must be crafty, intelligent, courtly in manner, accomplished in arms, of high rank, and with means to carry his state bravely, for not only ought he to be conspicuous in the Hippodrome; he should be welcome in the palace. Along with other facilities, he must be provided to buy service in the Emperor's bedroom and council chamber—

nay, at his elbow. It is of prime importance that he possesses my Lord's confidence unalterably. Am I understood?"

"The man, Prince, the man!"

"My Lord has already named him."

"I?"

"Only to–night my Lord spoke of him as a marvel."

"Mirza!" exclaimed Mahommed, clapping his hands.

"Mirza," the Prince returned, and proceeded without pause: "Despatch him to Italy; then let him appear in Constantinople, embarked from a galley, habited like a Roman, and with a suitable Italian title. He speaks Italian already, is fixed in his religion, and in knightly honor. Not all the gifts at the despot's disposal, nor the blandishments of society can shake his allegiance—he worships my Lord."

"My servant has found much favor with you, O Prince?"

Accepting the remark as a question, the other answered:

"Did I not spend the night with him at El Zaribah? Was I not witness of his trial of faith at the Holy Kaaba? Have I not heard from my Lord himself how, when put to choice, he ignored my prohibition respecting the stars?"

Mahommed arose, and again walked to and fro.

"There is a trouble in this proposal, Prince," he said, halting abruptly. "So has Mirza become a part of me, I am scarcely myself without him."

Another turn across the floor, and he seemed to become reconciled. "Let us have done for to–night," he next said. "The game is imperative, but it will not be harmed by a full discussion. Stay with me to–morrow, Prince."

The Prince remembered the Emperor. Not unlikely a message from that high personage was at his house, received in course of the day.

"True, very true, and the invitation is a great honor to me," he replied, bowing; "but I am reminded that the gossips in Byzantium will feast each other when to–morrow it passes from court to bazaar how the Princess Irene and the Prince of India were driven by the storm to accept hospitality

in the White Castle. And if it get abroad, that Mahommed, son of the great Amurath, came also to the Castle, who may foretell the suspicions to hatch in the city? No, my Lord, I submit it is better for me to depart with the Princess at the subsidence of the waters."

"Be it so," Mahommed returned, cordially. "We understand each other. I am to wait and you to communicate with me; and now, morning comes apace, good night."

He held his hand to the Jew; whereat the latter knelt and kissed the hand, but retained it to say:

"My Lord, if I know him rightly, will not sleep to–night; thought is an enemy to sleep; and besides the inspiration there is in the destiny promised, its achievement lies all before him. Yet I wish to leave behind me one further topic, promising it is as much greater than any other as the Heavens are higher than the earth."

"Rise, Prince," said Mahommed, helping him to his feet. "Such ceremonious salutation whether in reception or at departure may be dispensed with hereafter; thou art not a stranger, but more than a guest. I count thee my friend whom everything shall wait upon—even myself. Speak now of what thou callest the greater scheme. I am most curious."

There was a silence while one might count ten slowly. The Jew in that space concentrated the mysterious force of which he was master in great store, so it shone in his eyes, gave tone to his voice, and was an outgoing of WILL in overwhelming current. "Lord Mahommed," he said, "I know you are a believer in God."

The young Turk was conscious of a strange thrill passing through him from brain to body.

"In nature and every quality the God of the Jew, the Christian, and the Moslem is the same. Take we their own sayings. Christ and Mahomet were witnesses sent to testify of Him first, highest and alone—Him the universal Father. Yet behold the perversity of man. God has been deposed, and for ages believers in Him have been divided amongst themselves; wherefore hate, jealousies, wars, battle and the smoke of slaughter

perpetually. But now is He at last minded to be restored. Hear, Lord Mahommed, hear with soul and mortal ear!"

The words and manner caught and exalted Mahommed's spirit. As Michael, with a sweep of his wings, is supposed to pass the nether depths, an impulsion bore the son of Amurath up to a higher and clearer plane. He could not but hear.

"Be it true now that God permits His presence to be known in human affairs only when He has a purpose to justify His interposition; then, as we dare not presume the capital of Christendom goes to its fall without His permission, why your designation for the mighty work? That you may be personally glorified, my Lord? Look higher. See yourself His chosen instrument—and this the deed! From the seat of the Caesars, its conquest an argument, He means you to bring men together in His name. Titles may remain—Jew, Moslem, Christian, Buddhist—but there shall be an end of wars for religion—all mankind are to be brethren in Him. This the deed, my Lord—Unity in God, and from it, a miracle of the ages slow to come but certain, the evolution of peace and goodwill amongst men. I leave the idea with you. Good night!"

Mahommed remained so impressed and confounded that the seer was permitted to walk out as from an empty room. Mirza received him outside the door.

CHAPTER XV

DEPARTURE FROM THE WHITE CASTLE

The storm continued till near daybreak. At sunrise the wind abated, and was rapidly succeeded by a dead calm; about the same time the last cloud disappeared, leaving the sky an azure wonder, and the shores of the Bosphorus far and near refreshed and purified.

After breakfast, Mirza conducted the Prince of India to another private audience with Mahommed. As the conference had relation to the subjects gone over in the night, the colloquy may be dispensed with, and only the conclusions given.

Mahommed admitted he had not been able to sleep; in good spirits, however, he agreed, if the Prince were accountable for the wakefulness, he was to be forgiven, since he had fairly foretold it, and, like other prophets, was entitled to immunity. The invitation to remain at the Castle was renewed, and again declined.

Mahommed next conceded the expediency of his waiting to hear what further the stars might say with respect to the great business before him, and voluntarily bound himself to passive conduct and silence; in assuagement of the impatience he knew would torment him, he insisted, however, upon establishing a line of couriers between his place of residence, wherever it might be, and the White Castle. Intelligence could thus be safely transmitted him from Constantinople. In furtherance of this object the Governor of the Castle would be instructed to honor the requests of the Prince of India.

Mahommed condescended next to approve the suggestion of a secret agency in Constantinople. Respecting a person for the service, the delicacy of which was conceded, he had reached the conclusion that there was no one subject to his control so fitted in every respect as Mirza. The selection of the Emir might prove troublesome since he was a favorite with the

Sultan; if investigations consequent on his continued absence were instituted, there was danger of their resulting in disagreeable exposure; nevertheless the venture was worth the while, and as time was important, the Emir should be sent off forthwith under instructions in harmony with the Prince's advice. Or more clearly, he was to betake himself to Italy immediately, and thence to the Greek capital, a nobleman amply provided with funds for his maintenance there in essential state and condition. His first duty when in the city should be to devise communication with the White Castle, where connection with the proposed line of couriers should be made for safe transmission of his own reports, and such intelligence as the Prince should from time to time consider it advisable to forward.

This of course contemplated recognition and concert between the Emir and the Prince. In token of his confidence in the latter, Mahommed would constitute him the superior in cases of difference of opinion; though from his knowledge of Mirza's romantic affection acquired in Mecca and on the road thither, he had little apprehension of such a difference.

Mahommed and the Prince were alike well satisfied with the conclusions between them, and their leave–taking at the end of the audience was marked with a degree of affection approaching that of father and son.

About mid–afternoon the Prince and Sergius sallied from the Castle to observe the water, and finding it quiet, they determined to embark.

The formalities of reception in the Castle were not less rigidly observed at the departure. In care of the eunuch the Princess and Lael descended to the hall of entrance where they were received by the supposed Governor, who was in armor thoroughly cleansed of dust and skilfully furbished. His manner was even more gallant and dignified. He offered his hand to assist the Princess to seat in the chair, and upon taking it she glanced furtively at his face, but the light was too scant for a distinct view.

In the Castle and out there were no spectators.

Passing the gate, the Princess bethought her of the story–teller, and looked for him well as she could through the narrow windows. At the landing, when the Governor had in silence, though with ease and grace,

helped her from the carriage, the porters being withdrawn, she proceeded to acknowledgments.

"I am sorry," she said, through her veil, "that I must depart without knowing the name or rank of my host."

"Had I greater rank. O Princess," he returned, gravely. "I should have pleasure in introducing myself; for then there would be a hope that my name supported by a title of dignity, would not be erased from your memory by the gayeties of the city to which you are going. The White Castle is a command suitable to one of humble grade, and to be saluted Governor, because I am charged with its keeping, satisfies my pride for the present. It is a convenient title, moreover, should you ever again honor me with a thought or a word."

"I submit perforce," she said. "Yet, Sir Governor, your name would have saved me from the wonder of my kinsman, if not his open question, when, as I am bound to, I tell him of the fair treatment and high courtesy you have shown me and my friends here while in refuge in your Castle walls. He knows it natural for the recipient of bounty to learn who the giver is, with name and history; but how amazed and displeased he will be when I barely describe your entertainment. Indeed, I fear he will think me guilty of over description or condemn me for ingratitude."

She saw the blood color his face, and noticed the air of sincerity with which he replied. "Princess, if payment for what you have received at my hands were worthy a thought, I should say now, and all my days through, down to the very latest, that to have heard you speak so graciously is an overprice out of computation."

The veil hid her responsive blush; for there was something in his voice and manner, possibly the earnestness marking them, which lifted the words out of the commonplace and formal. She could not but see how much more he left implied than actually expressed. For relief, she turned to another subject.

"If I may allude to a part of your generous attention, Sir Governor, distinguishing it from the whole, I should like to admit the pleasure had from the recitation of the Arabian story–teller. I will not ask his name;

still it must be a great happiness to traverse the world with welcome everywhere, and everywhere and all the time accompanied and inspired by a mind stored with themes and examples beautiful as the history of El Hatim."

A light singularly bright shone in the Governor's eyes, significant of a happy idea, and with more haste than he had yet evinced, he replied:

"O Princess, the name of the Arab is Aboo–Obeidah; in the desert they call him the Singing Sheik, and among Moslems, city bred and tent born alike, he is great and beloved. Such is his sanctity that all doors he knocks at open to him, even those of harems zealously guarded. When he arrives at Adrianople, in his first day there he will be conducted to the Hanoum of the Sultan, and at her signal the ladies of the household will flock to hear him. Now, would it please you, I will prevail on him to delay his journey that he may visit you at your palace."

"The adventure might distress him," she replied.

"Say not so. In such a matter I dare represent and pledge him. Only give me where you would have him come, and the time, O Princess, and he will be there, not a star in the sky more constant."

"With my promise of good welcome to him then," she said, well pleased, "be my messenger, Sir Governor, and say in the morning day after to–morrow at my palace by Therapia. And now thanks again, and farewell."

So saying she held her hand to him, and he kissed it, and assisted her into the boat.

The adieux of the others, the Prince of India, Sergius and Lael, were briefer. The Governor was polite to each of them; at the same time, his eyes, refusing restraint, wandered to where the Princess sat looking at him with unveiled face.

In the mouth of the river the boats were brought together, and, while drifting, she expressed the pleasure she had from the fortunate meeting with the Prince; his presence, she doubted not, contributed greatly to the good conclusion of what in its beginning seemed so unpromising.

"Nor can I convey an idea of the confidence and comfortable feeling I derived from the society of thy daughter," she added, speaking to the Prince, but looking at Lael. "She was courageous and sensible, and I cannot content myself until she is my guest at Therapia."

"I would be greatly pleased," Lael said, modestly.

"Will the Princess appoint a time?" the Wanderer asked.

"To–morrow—or next week—at your convenience. These warm months are delightful in the country by the water side. At Therapia, Prince—thou and thine. The blessing of the Saints go with you—farewell."

Then though the boats kept on down toward Constantinople, they separated, and in good time the Prince of India and Lael were at home; while the Princess carried Sergius to her palace in the city. Next day, having provided him with the habit approved by metropolitan Greek priests, she accompanied him to the patriarchal residence, introduced him with expressions of interest, and left him in the holy keeping.

Sergius was accepted and rated a neophyte, the vanity of the Byzantine clergy scorning thought of excellence in a Russian provincial. He entered upon the life, however, with humility and zeal, governed by a friendly caution from the Princess.

"Remember," she said to him, as they paused on the patriarchal doorsteps for permission to enter, "remember Father Hilarion is regarded here as a heretic. The stake, imprisonment in darkness for life, the lions in the Cynegion, punishment in some form of approved cruelty awaits a follower of his by open avowal. Patience then; and when endurance is tried most, and you feel it must break, come to me at Therapia. Only hold yourself in readiness, by reading and thought, to speak for our Christian faith unsullied by human inventions, and bide my signal."

And so did he observe everything and venture nothing that presently he was on the road to high favor.

CHAPTER XVI

AN EMBASSY TO THE PRINCESS IRENE

When the Princess Irene returned to Therapia next day, she found awaiting her the Dean of the Court, an official of great importance to whom the settlement of questions pertinent to rank was confided. The state barge of fifteen oars in which he arrived was moored to the marbles of the quay in front of her palace, a handsomely ornamented vessel scarcely needing its richly liveried rowers to draw about it the curious and idle of the town in staring groups. At sight of it, the Princess knew there was a message for her from the Emperor. She lost no time in notifying the Dean of her readiness to receive him. The interview took place in the reception room.

The Dean was a venerable man who, having served acceptably through the preceding reign, was immensely discreet, and thoroughly indurate with formalism and ceremony; wherefore, passing his speech and manner, it is better worth the while to give, briefly as may be, the substance of the communication he brought to the Princess.

He was sure she remembered all the circumstances of the coronation of His Majesty, the Emperor, and of His Majesty's entry into Constantinople; he was not so certain, however, of her information touching some matters distinguishable as domestic rather than administrative. Or she might know of them, but not reliably. Thus she might not have heard authentically that, immediately upon his becoming settled in the imperial seat, His Majesty decided it of first importance to proceed to the selection of a spouse.

The Dean then expatiated on the difficulty of finding in all the world a woman suitable for the incomparable honor. So many points entered into the consideration—age, appearance, rank, education, religion, dowry, politics—upon each of which he dwelt with the gravity of a philosopher, the assurance of a favorite, and the garrulity of age. Having at length presented the problem, and, he thought, sufficiently impressed the Princess

with its unexampled intricacies and perils, he next unfolded the several things resolved upon and attempted in the way of solution.

Every royal house in the West had been searched for its marriageable females. At one time a daughter of the Doge of Venice was nearly chosen. Unfortunately there were influential Greeks of greater pride than judgment to object to the Doge. He was merely an elective chief. He might die the very day after celebrating the espousals, and then—not even the ducal robes were inheritable. No, the flower to deck the Byzantine throne was not in the West.

Thereupon the East was explored. For a time the election trembled between a Princess of Trebizond and a Princess of Georgia. As usual the court divided on the question, when, to quiet the factions, His Majesty ordered Phranza, the Grand Chamberlain, a courtier of learning and diplomatic experience, who held the Emperor's confidence in greater degree than any other court official, unless it might be the Dean himself, to go see the rivals personally, and report with recommendation. The ambassador had been gone two years. From Georgia he had travelled to Trebizond; still nothing definite. The embassy, having been outfitted in a style to adequately impress the semi–barbarians, was proving vastly expensive. His Majesty, with characteristic wisdom, had determined to take the business in his own keeping. There were many noble families in Constantinople. Why not seek a consort among them?

The scheme had advantages; not least, if a Byzantine could be found, the Emperor would have the happiness of making the discovery and conducting the negotiations himself—in common parlance, of doing his own courting. There might be persons, the Dean facetiously remarked, who preferred trusting the great affair of wife–choosing to ambassadors, but he had never seen one of them.

The ground covered by the ancient in his statement is poorly represented by these paragraphs, ample as they may seem to the reader. Indeed, the sun was falling swiftly into the lap of night when he thought of concluding. Meantime the Princess listened silently, her patience sustained by wonder at what it all meant. The enlightenment at last came.

"Now, my dear Princess," he said, lowering his voice, "you must know "—he arose, and, as became one so endued with palace habits, peered cautiously around.

"Be seated, my Lord," she said; "there are no eyes in my doors nor ears in my walls."

"Oh, the matter is of importance—a state secret!" He drew the stool nearer her.

"You must know, dear Princess, that the Grand Chamberlain, Phranza, has been negligent and remiss in the time he has consumed, saying nothing of his lavishment of treasure so badly needed at home. Notaras, the Admiral, and the Grand Domestic, are both pursuing His Majesty vigorously for funds and supplies; worse still, the Patriarch lets slip no opportunity to bid him look at the furniture of the churches going to ruin. The imperial conscience being tender in whatever pertains to God and religion, he has little peace left for prayers. Wherefore, there are of us who think it would be loyalty to help secure a bride for His Majesty at home, and thus make an end to the wasteful and inconclusive touring of Phranza."

The Dean drew yet nearer the Princess, and reduced his voice to a tone slightly above a whisper.

"Now you must know further—I am the author and suggestor of the idea of His Majesty's choosing an Empress from the many noble and beautiful dames and maidens of this our ancient city of Byzantium, in every respect the equals, and in many points mentionable the superiors of the best foreigner possible of finding."

The Dean pursed his white–bearded mouth, and posed himself proudly; but his auditor still holding her peace, he leaned forward further, and whispered, "My dear Princess, I did more. I mentioned you to His Majesty"—

The Princess started to her feet, whiter than whitest marble in the Pentelic panelling of the room; yet in total misapprehension of her feeling, the venerable intriguant went on without pause: "Yes, I mentioned you to

His Majesty, and to–morrow, Princess—to–morrow—he will come here in person to see you, and urge his suit."

He dropped on his knees, and catching her hand, kissed it.

"O Princess, fairest and most worthy, suffer me first of all the court to congratulate you on the superlative honor to which you will he invited. And when you are in the exalted position, may I hope to he remembered"—

He was not permitted to finish the petition. Withdrawing her hand with decisive action, she bade him be silent or speak to her questions. And he was silent through surprise.

In such manner she gained an interval for thought. The predicament, as she saw it, was troublesome and unfortunate. Honor was intended her, the highest in the imperial gift, and the offer was coming with never a doubt of its instantaneous and grateful acceptance. Remembering her obligations to the Emperor, her eyes filled with tears. She respected and venerated him, yet could not be his Empress. The great title was not a sufficient inducement. But how manage the rejection? She called on the Virgin for help. Directly there was a way exposed. First, she must save her benefactor from rejection; second, the Dean and the court must never know of the course of the affair or its conclusion.

"Rise, my Lord," she said, kindly though with firmness. "The receiver of great news, I thank you, and promise, if ever I attain the throne to hold you in recollection. But now, so am I overwhelmed by the prospect, I am not myself. Indeed, my Lord, would you increase my indebtedness to its utmost limit, take every acknowledgment as said, and leave me—leave me for preparation for the morrow's event. God, his Son and angels only know the awfulness of my need of right direction and good judgment."

He had the wit to see her agitation, and that it was wisest for him to depart.

"I will go, Princess," he said, "and may the Holy Mother give you of her wisdom also." She detained him at the door to ask: "Only tell me, my Lord, did His Majesty send you with this notice?"

"His Majesty honored me with the message."

"At what hour will he come?"

"In the forenoon."

"Report, I pray you then, that my house will be at his service."

CHAPTER XVII

THE EMPEROR'S WOOING

About ten o'clock the day following the extraordinary announcement given, a galley of three banks of oars, classed a *trireme*, rounded the seaward jut of the promontory overhanging the property of the Princess Irene at Therapia.

The hull of the vessel was highly ornate with gilding and carving. At the how, for figure–head, there was an image of the Madonna of the *Panagia*, or Holy Banner of Constantinople. The broad square sail was of cherry–red color, and in excellent correspondence, the oars, sixty to a side, were painted a flaming scarlet. When filled, the sail displayed a Greek cross in golden filament. The deck aft was covered with a purple awning, in the shade of which, around a throne, sat a grave and decorous company in gorgeous garments; and among them moved a number of boys, white–shirted and bare of head, dispensing perfume from swinging censers. Forward, a body guard, chosen from the household troops and full armed, were standing at ease, and they, with a corps of trumpeters and heralds in such splendor of golden horns and tabards of gold as to pour enrichment over the whole ship, filled the space from bulwark to bulwark. The Emperor occupied the throne.

This galley, to which the harmonious movement of the oars gave a semblance of life, in the distance reminding one of a great bird fantastically feathered and in slow majestic motion, was no sooner hove in sight than the townspeople were thrown into ferment. A flotilla of small boats, hastily launched, put out in racing order to meet and escort it into the bay, and before anchorage was found, the whole shore was astir and in excited babblement.

A detachment of the guard was first landed on the quay in front of the Princess' gate. Accepting the indication, thither rushed the populace; for in

truth, since the occupation of the Asiatic shore of the Bosphorus by the Turks, the Emperor seldom extended his voyages far as Therapia. Then, descending the sides by carpeted stairs, the suite disembarked, and after them, amidst a tremendous flourish from the trumpet corps, Constantine followed.

The Emperor, in his light boat, remained standing during the passage to the shore that he might be seen by the people; and as he then appeared, helmed and in close–fitting cuirass, his arms in puffed sleeves of red silk, his legs, below a heavily embroidered narrow skirt, clothed in pliant chain mail intricately linked, his feet steel–shod, a purple cloak hanging lightly at the back from neck to heel, and spurred and magnificently sworded, and all agleam with jewels and gold, it must be conceded he justified his entitlement.

At sight of his noble countenance, visible under the raised visor, the spectators lifted their voices in hearty acclamations—"God and Constantine! Live the Emperor!"

It really seemed as if the deadly factiousness of the capital had not reached Therapia. In the lifted head, the brightened eyes, the gracious though stately bows cast right and left, Constantine published the pleasure the reception was giving him.

A long flourish timed his march through the kiosk of the gate, and along the shell–strewn, winding road, to the broad steps leading to the portico of the palace; there, ascending first, he was received by the Princess.

Amid a group of maids in attendance, all young, fair, high–born, she stood, never more tastefully attired, never more graceful and self–possessed, never more lovely, not even in childhood before the flitting of its virginal bloom; and though the portico was garden–like in decoration, vines, roses and flowering shrubs everywhere, the sovereign had eyes for her alone.

Just within the line of fluted pillars he halted, and drew himself up, smiling as became a suitor, yet majestic as became a king. Then she stepped forward, and knelt, and kissed his hand, and when he helped her to her feet, and before the flush on her forehead was gone, she said:

"Thou art my sovereign and benefactor; nor less for the goodnesses thou hast done to thy people, and art constantly doing, welcome, O my Lord, to the house thou didst give me."

"Speak not so," he replied. "Or if it please thee to give me credit, be it for the things which in some way tried me, not those I did for reward."

"Reward!"

"Ay, for such are pleasure and peace of mind."

Then one by one, she naming them as they advanced, her attendants knelt, and kissed the floor in front of him, and had each a pleasant word, for he permitted none to excel him in decorous gallantry to good women.

In return, he called the officers of his company according to their rank; his brother, who had afterward the grace to die with him; the Grand Domestic, general of the army; the Grand Duke Notaras, admiral of the navy; the Grand Equerry (*Protostrator*); the Grand Chancellor of the Empire (*Logothete*); the Superintendent of Finance; the Governor of the Palace (*Curopalate*); the Keeper of the Purple Ink; the Keeper of the Secret Seal; the First Valet; the Chief of the Night Guard (*Grand Drumgaire*); the Chief of the Huntsmen (*Protocynege*); the Commander of the Body Guard of Foreigners (*Acolyte*); the Professor of Philosophy; the Professor of Elocution and Rhetoric; the Attorney General (*Nornophylex*); the Chief Falconer (*Protojeracaire*) and others—these he called one by one, and formally presented to the Princess, not minding that with many of them she was already acquainted.

They were for the most part men advanced in years, and right well skilled in the arts of courtiership. The *empressement* of manner with which they saluted her was not lost upon her woman's instinct; infinitely quick and receptive, she knew without a word spoken, that each left his salute on her hand believing it the hand of his future Empress. Last of those presented was the Dean of the Court. He was noticeably formal and distant; besides being under the eye of his master, the wily diplomat was more doubtful of the outcome of the day's visit than most of his colleagues.

"Now," the Princess said, when the presentation was finished, "will my most noble sovereign suffer me to conduct him to the reception room?"

The Emperor stepped to her side, and offered his hand. "Pardon, Sire," she added, taking the hand. "It is necessary that I speak to the Dean."

And when the worthy came to her, she said to him: "Beyond this, under the portico, are refreshments for His Majesty's suite. Serve me, I pray, by leading thy colleagues thither, and representing me at the tables. Command the servants whom thou wilt find there."

Now the reader must not suppose he is having in the foregoing descriptions examples of the style of ceremonials most in fashion at the Greek court. Had formality been intended, the affair would have been the subject of painstaking consideration at a meeting of officials in the imperial residence, and every point within foresight arranged; after which the revolution of the earth might have quickened, and darkness been unnaturally precipitated, without inducing the slightest deviation from the programme.

When resolving upon the visit, Constantine considerately thought of the Princess' abhorrence of formality, and not to surprise her, despatched the Dean with notice of the honor intended. Whereupon she arranged the reception to suit herself; that is, so as to remain directress of the occasion. Hence the tables under the portico for the entertainment of the great lords, with the garden open to them afterward. This management, it will be perceived, left Constantine in her separate charge.

So, while the other guests went with the Dean, she conducted the Emperor to the reception room, where there were no flowers, and but one armless chair. When he was seated, the two alone, she knelt before him, and without giving him time to speak, said, her hands crossed upon her bosom: "I thank my Lord for sending me notice of his coming, and of his purpose to invite me to share his throne. All night I have kept the honor he intended me in mind, believing the Blessed Mother would listen to my prayers for wisdom and right direction; and the peace and confidence I feel, now that I am at my Lord's feet, must be from her… Oh, my Lord, the trial has not been what I should do with the honor, but how to defend you

from humiliation in the eyes of your court. I wish to be at the same time womanly and allegiant. How gentle and merciful you have been to me! How like a benignant God to my poor father! If I am in error, may Heaven forgive me; but I have led you here to say, without waiting for the formal proposal, that while you have my love as a kinswoman and subject, I cannot give you the love you should have from a wife."

Constantine was astonished.

"What!" he said.

Before he could get further, she continued, sinking lower at his feet:

"Ah me, my Lord, if now thou art thinking me bold and forward, and outcast from natural pride, what can I but plead the greater love I bear you as my benefactor and sovereign?… It may be immodest to thus forestall my Lord's honorable intent, and decline being his wife before he has himself proposed it; yet I pray him to consider that with this avowal from me, he may go hence and affirm, God approving the truth, that he thought better of his design, and did not make me any overture of marriage, and there will be no one to suffer but me… The evil–minded will talk, and judge me punished for my presumption. Against them I shall always have a pure conscience, and the knowledge of having rescued my Lord from an associate on his throne who does not love him with wifely devotion."

Pausing there, the Princess looked into his face, her own suffused. His head drooped; insomuch that the tall helmet with its glitter, and the cuirass, and fine mail reenforced by the golden spurs and jewelled sword and sword–harness, but deepened the impression of pain bewrayed on his countenance.

"Then it is as I have heard," he said, dejectedly. "The rustic hind may have the mate of his choice, and there is preference allowed the bird and wild wolf. The eye of faith beholds marriages of love in meeting waters and in clouds brought together from diverse parts. Only Kings are forbidden to select mates as their hearts declare. I, a master of life and death, cannot woo, like other men."

The Princess moved nearer him.

"My Lord," she said, earnestly, "is it not better to be denied choice than to be denied after choosing?"

"Speakest thou from experience?" he asked.

"No," she answered, "I have never known love except of all God's creatures alike."

"Whence thy wisdom then?"

"Perhaps it is only a whisper of pride."

"Perhaps, perhaps! I only know the pain it was intended to relieve goes on." Then, regarding her moodily, not angrily, nor even impatiently, he continued: "Did I not know thee true as thou art fair, O Princess, and good and sincere as thou art brave, I might suspect thee."

"Of what, my Lord?"

"Of an intent to compass my misery. Thou dost stop my mouth. I may not declare the purpose with which I came—I to whom it was of most interest —or if I do, I am forestopped saying, 'I thought better of it, and told her nothing.' Yet it was an honorable purpose nursed by sweet dreams, and by hopes such as souls feed upon, strengthening themselves for trials of life; I must carry it back with me, not for burial in my own breast, but for gossips to rend and tear, and make laughter of—the wonder and amusement of an unfeeling city. How many modes of punishment God keeps in store for the chastening of those who love Him!"

"It is beggarly saying I sympathize"—

"No, no—wait!" he cried, passionately. "Now it breaks upon me. I may not offer thee a seat on my throne, or give a hand to help thee up to it; for the present I will not declare I love thee; yet harm cannot come of telling thee what has been. Thou hadst my love at our first meeting. I loved thee then. As a man I loved thee, nor less as an Emperor because a man. Thou wast lovely with the loveliness of the angels. I saw thee in a light not of earth, and thou wert transparent as the light. I descended from the throne to thee thinking thou hadst collected all the radiance of the sun wasting in the void between stars, and clothed thyself in it."

"Oh, my Lord"—

"Not yet, not yet"—

"Blasphemy and madness!"

"Be it so!" he answered, with greater intensity. "This once I speak as a lover who was—a lover making last memories of the holy passion, to be henceforth accounted dead. Dead? Ah, yes!—to me—dead to me!"

She timidly took the hand he dropped upon his knee at the close of a long sigh.

"It may rest my Lord to hear me," she said, tearfully. "I never doubted his fitness to be Emperor, or if ever I had such a doubt, it is no more. He has conquered himself! Indeed, indeed, it is sweet to hear him tell his love, for I am woman; and if I cannot give it back measure for measure, this much may be accepted by him—I have never loved a man, and if the future holds such a condition in store for me, I will think of my Lord, and his strength and triumph, and in my humbler lot do as he has so nobly done. He has his Empire to engage him, and fill his hours with duties; I have God to serve and obey with singleness. Out of the prison where my mother died, and in which my father grew old counting his years as they slowly wore away, a shadow issued, and is always at hand to ask me, 'Who art thou? What right hast thou to happiness?' And if ever I fall into the thought so pleasant to woman, of loving and being loved, and of marriage, the shadow intervenes, and abides with me until I behold myself again bounden to religion, a servant vowed to my fellow creatures sick, suffering, or in sorrow."

Then the gentle Emperor fell to pitying her, and asked, forgetful of himself, and thinking of things to lighten her lot, "Wilt thou never marry?"

"I will not say no, my Lord," she answered. "Who can foresee the turns of life? Take thou this in reply—never will I surrender myself to wedlock under urgency of love alone. But comes there some great emergency, when, by such sacrifice, I may save my country, or my countrymen in multitude, or restore our holy religion overthrown or in danger, then, for the direct God–service there may be in it, I could give myself in contract, and would."

"Without love?" he asked.

"Yes, without loving or being loved. This body is not mine, but God's, and He may demand it of me for the good of my fellow–men; and, so there be no tarnishment of the spirit, my Lord, why haggle about the husk in which the spirit is hidden?"

She spoke with enthusiasm. Doubt of her sincerity would have been blasphemous. That such fate should be for her, so bright, pure and heroic! Not while he had authority! And in the instant he vowed himself to care of her by resolution strong as an oath. In thought of the uncertainties lowering over his own future, he saw it was better she should remain vowed to Heaven than to himself; thereupon he arose, and standing at her side, laid a hand lightly upon her head, and said solemnly:

"Thou hast chosen wisely. May the Blessed Mother, and all the ministering angels, in most holy company, keep guard lest thou be overtaken by calamity, sorrow and disappointment. And, for me, O Irene!"—his voice shook with emotion—"I shall be content if now thou wilt accept me for thy father."

She raised her eyes, as to Heaven, and said, smiling: "Dear God! How Thou dost multiply goodnesses, and shower them upon me!"

He stooped, and kissed her forehead.

"Amen, sweet daughter!"

Then he helped her to her feet.

"Now, while thou wert speaking, Irene, it was given me to see how the betrothal I was determined upon would have been a crime aside from wresting thee from the service of thy choice. Phranza is a true and faithful servant. How know I but, within his powers, and as he lawfully might, he has contracted me by treaty to acceptance of the Georgian? Thou hast saved me, and my ancient Chamberlain. Those under the portico are conspirators. But come, let us join them."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SINGING SHEIK

IT was about ten o'clock when the Emperor and Princess Irene appeared on the portico, and, moving toward the northern side, wended slowly through the labyrinth of flowers, palms, and shrubs. The courtiers and dignitaries, upon their approach, received them in respectful silence, standing in groups about the tables.

A chair, with arms, high back, and a canopy, looking not unlike a sedilium, had been set in an open space. The reservation was further marked by a table in front of the chair, and two broad–branched palm trees, one on each side. Thither the Princess conducted the sovereign; and when he was seated, at a signal from her, some chosen attendants came bearing refreshments, cold meats, bread, fruits, and wines in crystal flagons, which they placed on the table, and retiring a little way, remained in waiting, while their mistress, on a stool at the left of the board, did the honors.

The introduction of a queen into a palace is usually the signal for a change of the existing domestic regime. Old placeholders go out; new favorites come in; and not seldom the revolution reaches the highest official circles of the government. The veterans of the suite, to some of whom this bit of knowledge had come severely home, were very watchful of the two superior personages. Had His Majesty really exposed his intent to the Princess? Had he declared himself to her? Had she accepted? The effect was to trebly sharpen the eyes past which the two were required to go on their way to the reserved table.

Mention has been made of Phranza, the Grand Chamberlain, at the moment absent on a diplomatic search for an imperial consort. Of all attaches of the court, he was first in his master's regard; and the distinction, it is but just to say, was due to his higher qualities and superior

character. The term *favorite*, as a definition of relationship between a despot and a dependent, is historically cloudy; wherefore it is in this instance of unfair application. Intimate or confidante is much more exactly descriptive. But be that as it may, the good understanding between the Emperor and his Grand Chamberlain was amply sufficient to provoke the jealousy of many of the latter's colleagues, of whom Duke Notaras, Grand Admiral, and the most powerful noble of the Empire, was head and front. The scheme for the elevation of the Princess to the throne originated with him, and was aimed malevolently at Phranza, of whom he was envious, and Constantine, whom he hated on religious grounds. Interest in the plot brought him to Therapia; yet he held himself aloof, preferring the attitude of a spectator coldly polite to that of an active partisan in the affair. He declined sitting at a table, but took position between two of the columns whence the view of the bay was best. There were numbers of the suite, however, who discredited the motive with which he chose the place.

"See Notaras," said one of a group, whispering to friends drinking wine a little way off. "The scene before him is charming, but is he charmed with it as he appears?"

"There was an old demi–god with an eye in his forehead. Notaras' best orb just now is in the back of his head. He may be looking at the bay; he is really watching the portico"—such was the reply.

"Out! He cares nothing for us."

"Very true—we are not the Emperor."

"My Lord Duke is not happy to–day," was remarked in another coterie.

"Wait, my dear friend. The day is young."

"If this match should not be made after all"—

"He will know it first."

"Yes, nothing from the lovers, neither smile nor sigh, can escape him."

The Professor of Philosophy and his brother the Professor of Rhetoric ate and drank together, illustrating the affinity of learning.

"Our Phranza is in danger," said the latter, nervously. "As thou art a subscriber to the doctrine of the *Phaedon*, I wish we could disembody our

souls, if only for an hour."

"Oh, a singular wish! What wouldst thou?"

"Tell it not; but"—the voice dropped into a whisper—"I would despatch mine in search of the wise Chamberlain to warn him of what is here in practice."

"Ah, my brother, thou didst me the honor to read and approve my treatise on the Philosophy of Conspiracy. Dost thou remember the confounding elements given in the thesis?"

"Yes—Goodness is one."

"Under condition; that is, when the result is dependent upon a party of virtuous disposition."

"I remember now."

"Well, we have the condition here."

"The Princess!"

"And therefore the Duke, not our Phranza, is in danger. She will discomfit him."

"May Heaven dispose so!" And the Rhetorician almost immediately added, "Observe thou. Notaras has established himself within easy hearing of the two. He has actually invaded the space reserved for them."

"As if to confirm my forecast!"

Then the Philosopher raised a cup.

"To Phranza!"

"To Phranza!" the Rhetorician responded.

This episode hardly concluded when the Emperor's brother sauntered to the Duke's side; and on the appearance of the Emperor and the Princess, he exclaimed, enthusiastically:

"Come of it what may, my Lord, the damsel is comely, and I fear not to compare her with the best of Trebizond or Georgia."

The Duke did not answer. Indeed, the lords were all intent upon exactly the same subject. Whether there had been an overture and an acceptance, or an overture and a declination, they believed the principals could not

conceal the result; a look, a gesture, or something in the manner of one or both of them, would tell the tale to eyes of such practical discernment. By the greater number the information would be treated as news for discussion merely; a few had hopes or fears at stake; none of them was so perilously involved as Notaras; in his view, failure meant the promotion of Phranza, of all consequences, not excepting his own loss of favor and prestige, the most intolerable.

On the other part, Constantine was not less concerned in misleading his court. At the proper time he would give out that he had changed his mind at the last moment; before engaging himself to the Princess, he had concluded it best to wait and hear from Phranza. Accordingly, in passing along the portico, he endeavored to look and behave like a guest; he conversed in an ordinary tone; he suffered his hostess to precede him; and, well seconded by her, he was installed in the state chair, without an argument yes or no for the sharp reviewers. At the table he appeared chiefly solicitous to appease an unusual hunger, which he charged to the early morning air on the Bosphorus.

Notaras, whom nothing of incident, demeanor or remark escaped, began very early to be apprehensive. Upon beholding his master's unlover–like concession to appetite, he remarked sullenly, "Verily, either his courage failed, and he did not submit a proposal, or she has rejected him."

"My Lord Duke," the Emperor's brother replied, somewhat stung, "dost thou believe it in woman to refuse such an honor?"

"Sir," the Duke retorted, "women who go about unveiled are above or below judgment."

The Princess, in her place at the table, began there to recount her adventure at the White Castle, but when far enough in the recital to indicate its course the Emperor interrupted her.

"Stay, daughter," he said, gently. "The incident may prove of international interest. If not objectionable to you, I should be pleased to have some of my friends hear it." Then raising his voice, he called out: "Notaras, and thou, my brother, come, stand here. Our fair hostess had yesterday an astonishing experience with the Turks on the other shore, and

I have prevailed on her to narrate it." The two responded to the invitation by drawing nearer the Emperor at his right hand.

"Proceed now, daughter," the latter said.

"Daughter, daughter, indeed!" the Duke repeated to himself, and so bitterly it may be doubted if his master's diplomacy availed to put him at rest. The paternalism of the address was decisive—Phranza had won.

Then, presently overcoming her confusion, the Princess succeeded in giving a simple but clear account of how she was driven to the Castle, and of what befell her while there. When she finished, the entire suite were standing about the table listening.

Twice she had been interrupted by the Emperor.

"A moment!" he said to her, while she was speaking of the Turkish soldiery whose arrival at the ancient stronghold had been so nearly simultaneous with her own. Then he addressed himself to the Grand Domestic and the Admiral. "My Lords, in passing the Castle, on our way up, you remember I bade the pilot take our ship near the shore there. It seemed to me the garrison was showing unusually large, while the flags on the donjon were strange, and the tents and horses around the walls implied an army present. You remember?"

"And we have now, Sire, the justification of your superior wisdom," the Grand Domestic replied, rising from a low salutation.

"I recall the circumstance, my Lords, to enjoin you not to suffer the affair to slip attention when next we meet in council—I pray pardon, daughter, for breaking the thread of your most interesting and important narrative. I am prepared to listen further."

Then, after description of the Governor, and his reception of the fugitives on the landing, His Majesty, with apologies, asked permission to offer another inquiry.

"Of a truth, daughter, the picture thou hast given us under the title of Governor beareth no likeness to him who hath heretofore responded to that dignity. At various times I have had occasion to despatch messengers to the commandant, and returning, they have reported him a coarse,

unrefined, brutish–looking person, of middle age and low rank; and much I marvel to hear the freedom with which this person doth pledge my august friend and ally, Sultan Amurath. My Lords, this will furnish us an additional point of investigation. Obviously the Castle is of military importance, requiring an old head full of experience to keep it regardful of peace and clear understanding between the powers plying the Bosphorus. We are always to be apprehensive of the fire there is in young blood."

"With humility, Your Majesty," said the Grand Domestic, "I should like to hear from the Princess, whose loveliness is now not more remarkable than her courage and discretion, the evidence she has for the opinion that the young man is really the Governor."

She was about to reply when Lysander, the old servant, elbowed himself through the brilliant circle, and dropped his javelin noisily by her chair.

"A stranger calling himself an Arab is at the gate," he said to her, with the semblance of a salutation.

The simplicity of the ancient, his zeal in the performance of his office, his obliviousness to the imperial presence, caused a ripple of amusement.

"An Arab!" the Princess exclaimed, in momentary forgetfulness. "How does the man appear?"

Lysander was in turn distraught; after a short delay, however, he managed to answer: "His face is dark, almost black; his head is covered with a great cloth of silk and gold; a gown hides him from neck to heels; in his girdle there is a dagger. He has a lordly air, and does not seem in the least afraid. In brief, my mistress, he looks as if he might be king of all the camel drivers in the world."

The description was unexpectedly graphic; even the Emperor smiled, while many of the train, presuming license from his amusement, laughed aloud. In the midst of the merriment, the Princess, calmly, and with scarce a change from her ordinary tone, proceeded to an explanation.

"Your Majesty," she said, "I am reminded of an invitation left with the person whose identity was in discussion the instant of this announcement. In the afternoon, while I was sojourning in the White Castle, an Arab

story–teller was presented to me under recommendation of my courteous host. He was said to be of great professional renown in the East, a Sheik travelling to Adrianople for the divertisement of the Hanoum of the Sultan. In the desert they call him endearingly the *Singing Sheik*. I was glad to have the hours assisted in their going, and he did not disappoint me. So charmed was I by his tales and manner of telling them, by his genius, that in taking my departure from what proved a most agreeable retreat, and in acknowledging the hospitable entertainment given me, I referred to the singer, and requested the Governor to prevail on him to extend his journey here, in order to favor me with another opportunity to hear him. Had I then known it was in my Lord's purposes to visit me with such a company of most noble gentlemen, or could I have even anticipated the honor, I should not have appointed to–day for the audience with him. But he is in attendance; and now, with full understanding of the circumstances, it is for Your Majesty to pronounce upon his admission. Perhaps"—she paused with a look of deprecation fairly divisible share and share alike between the Emperor and the Lords around her—"perhaps time may hang heavy with my guests this morning; if so, I shall hold myself obliged to the Singing Sheik if he can help me entertain them."

Now, was there one present to attach a criticism to the favor extended the Arab, he dismissed it summarily, wondering at her easy grace. The Emperor no doubt shared the admiration with his suite; but concealing it, he said, with an air of uncertainty, "Thy recommendation, daughter, is high; and if I remain, verily, it will be with expectation wrought up to a dangerous degree; yet having often heard of the power of the strolling poets of whom this one is in probability an excellent example, I confess I should be pleased to have thee admit him."

Of the Admiral, he then asked, "We were to set out in return about noon, were we not?"

"About noon, Your Majesty."

"Well, the hour is hardly upon us. Let the man appear, daughter; only, as thou lovest us, contrive that he keep to short recitals, which, without holding us unwillingly, will yet suffice to give an idea of his mind and

methods. And keep thyself prepared for an announcement of our departure, and when received, mistake it not for discontent with thyself. Admit the Arab."

CHAPTER XIX

TWO TURKISH TALES

The situation now offered the reader is worth a pause, if only to fix it in mind.

Constantine and Mahommed, soon to be contestants in war, are coming face to face, lovers both of the same woman. The romance is obvious; yet it is heightened by another circumstance. One of them is in danger.

We of course know Aboo–Obeidah, the Singing Sheik, is Prince Mahommed in disguise; we know the Prince also as heir of Amurath the Sultan, a very old man liable to vacate place and life at any moment. Suppose now the rash adventurer—the term fits the youth truly as if he were without rank—should be discovered and denounced to the Emperor. The consequences can only be treated conjecturally.

In the first place, to what extremities the Prince would be put in explaining his presence there. He could plead the invitation of the Princess Irene. But his rival would be his judge, and the judge might find it convenient to laugh at the truth, and rest his decision on the prisoner's disguise, in connection with his own presence—two facts sufficiently important to serve the most extreme accusation.

Constantine, next, was a knightly monarch who knew to live nobly, and dared die as he lived; yet, thinking of what he might do with Mahommed fallen into his hands under circumstances so peculiar, there was never a Caesar not the slave of policy. In the audience to Manuel the sailor, we have seen how keenly sensitive he was to the contraction the empire had suffered. Since that day, to be sure, he had managed to keep the territory he came to; none the less, he felt the Turk to whom the stolen provinces invariably fell was his enemy, and that truce or treaty with him did not avail to loosen the compression steadily growing around his capital. Over and over, daytime and night, the unhappy Emperor pondered the story of

the daughter of Tantalus; and often, starting from dreams in which the Ottoman power was a serpent slowly crawling to its victim, he would cry in real agony—"O Constantinople—Niobe! Who can save thee but God? And if He will not—alas, alas!" The feeling thus engendered was not of a kind to yield readily to generosity. Mahommed once securely his, everything might be let go—truth, honor, glory—everything but the terms of advantage purchasable with such an hostage.

The invitation to the imaginary Sheik had been a last act of grace by Irene, about to embark for the city. Mahommed, when he accepted, knew Therapia by report a village very ancient historically, but decaying, and now little more than a summer resort and depot of supplies for fishermen. That its proverbial quietude would be disturbed, and the sleepy blood of its inhabitants aroused, by a royal galley anchoring in the bay to discharge the personnel of the empire itself, could have had no place in his anticipations. So when he stepped into a boat, the Aboo–Obeidah of his eulogy, and suffered himself, without an attendant, to be ferried across to Roumeli–Hissar; when he there took an humble wherry of two oars, and bade the unliveried Greeks who served them pull for Therapia, it was to see again the woman who was taking his fancy into possession, not Constantine and his court bizarre in splendor and habitude. In other words, Mahommed on setting out had no idea of danger. Love, or something very like it, was his sole inspiration.

The trireme, with the white cross on its red sail, its deck a martial and courtly spectacle, had been reported to him as the hundred and twenty flashing scarlet blades, in their operation a miracle of unity, whisked it by the old Castle, and he had come forth to see it. Where are they going? he asked those around him; and they, familiar with the Bosphorus, its shipping and navigation, answered unanimously, To exercise her crew up in the Black Sea; and thinking of the breadth of the dark blue fields there, the reply commended itself, and he dismissed the subject.

The course chosen by his boatmen when they put off from Roumeli–Hissar kept him close to the European shore, which he had leisure to study. Then, as now, it was more favored than its Asiatic opposite. The winds

from the sea, southward blowing, unloaded their mists to vivify its ivy and myrtle. The sunlight, tarrying longest over its pine–clad summits, coaxed habitations along the shore; here, a palace; there, under an overhanging cliff, a hamlet; yonder, a long extended village complaisantly adapting itself to the curvatures of the brief margin left it for occupancy. Wherever along the front of the heights and on the top there was room for a field the advantage had been seized. So the Prince had offered him the sight of all others most significant of peace among men—sight of farmers tilling the soil. With the lucid sky above him summer–laden, the water under and about him a liquid atmosphere, the broken mountain–face changing from lovely to lovelier, and occasionally awakening him with a superlative splendor, the abodes so near, and the orchards and strawberry and melon patches overhead, symbolizing goodwill and fraternity and happiness amongst the poor and humble—with these, and the rhythmic beating of the oars to soothe his spirit, fierce and mandatory even in youth, he went, the time divided between views fair enough for the most rapturous dreams, and the Greek, of whom, with all their brightness, they were but dim suggestions. Past the stream–riven gorge of Balta–Liman he went; past Emirghian; past the haven of Stenia, and the long shore–town of Yenikeui; then, half turning the Keuibachi bend, lo! Therapia, draggling down the stony steep, like a heap of bangles on a brown–red cheek. And there, in the soft embracement of the bay, a bird with folded wings asleep—the *trireme*!

The sight startled the Prince. He spoke to the rowers, and they ceased fighting the current, and with their chins over their shoulders, looked whither he pointed. From ship to shore he looked; then, pursuing the curve inland to the bridge at the upper end; thence down what may be called the western side, he beheld people crowding between a quay and a red kiosk over which pended a wooded promontory.

"There is a Princess living in this vicinity," said he to one of the rowers, slightly lifting the handkerchief from his face. "Where is her palace?"

"In the garden yonder. You see the gate over the heads of the men and women."

"What is her name?"

"Princess Irene. She is known on this shore as the Good Princess."

"Irene—a sound pleasant to the ear"—Mahommed muttered. "Why is she called good?"

"Because she is an angel of mercy to the poor."

"That is not usual with the great and rich," he said next, yielding to a charm in the encomiums.

"Yes," the boatman responded, "she is great, being akin to the Emperor, and rich, too, though"—

Here the man broke off to assist in bringing the boat back from its recession with the current, at this point boisterously swift.

"You were saying the Princess is rich," Mahommed said, when the oars were again at rest.

"Oh, yes! But I cannot tell you, my friend, how many are partners in her wealth. Every widow and orphan who can get to her comes away with a portion. Isn't it so?"

His companion grunted affirmatively, adding: "Down yonder a man with a crooked back lives in an arched cell opening on the water. Perhaps the stranger saw it as he came up."

"Yes," Mahommed answered.

"Well, in the back part of the cell he has an altar with a crucifix and a picture of the Blessed Mother on it, and he keeps a candle burning before them day and night—something he could not do if we did not help him, for candles of wax are costly. He has named the altar after the Princess, Sta. Irene. We often stop and go in there to pray; and I have heard the blessings in the light of that candle are rich and many as the Patriarch has for sale in Sta. Sophia."

These praises touched Mahommed; for, exalted as he was in station, he was aware of the proneness of the poor to berate the rich and grumble at the great, and that such had been a habit with them from the commencement of the world. Again the boat slipped down the current; when it was brought back, he asked: "When did the ship yonder come up?"

"This morning."

"Oh, yes! I saw it then, but thought the crew were being taken to the sea for practice."

"No," the boatman replied, "it is the state galley of His Majesty the Emperor. Did you not see him? He sat on the throne with all his ministers and court around him."

Mahommed was startled.

"Where is the Emperor now?" he inquired.

"I should say, seeing the crowd yonder, that His Majesty is in the palace with the Princess."

"Yes," said the second rower, "they are waiting to see him come out."

"Row out into the bay. I should like to have the view from that quarter."

While making the detour, Mahommed reflected. Naturally he remembered himself the son of Amurath; after which it was easy to marshal the consequences of exposure, if he persisted in his venture. He saw distinctly how his capture would be a basis of vast bargaining with his father, or, if the sturdy old warrior preferred revenge to payment of a ruinous ransom, how the succession and throne might slip to another, leaving him a prisoner for life.

Yet another matter presented itself to him which the reader may decide worthy a separate paragraph. Its mention has been waiting this opportunity. The Prince from Magnesia, his seat of government, was on the way to Adrianople, called thither by his father, who had chosen a bride for him, daughter of a renowned Emir. Regularly he would have crossed the Hellespont at Gallipoli; a whim, however, took him to the White Castle —whim or destiny, one being about as satisfactory as the other. Pondering silently whether it were not best to return, he thought, apropos the Princess Irene, of the nuptials to be celebrated, and of his bride expectant; and a Christian, pausing over the suggestion, may be disposed to condemn him for inconstancy.

In countries where many wives are allowed the same husband he is not required to love any of them. Indeed, his fourth spouse may be the first to

command him; hers the eyes for his enslavement; hers the voice of the charmer charming both wisely and forever. Mahommed did now think of the Emir's daughter, but not with compunction, nor even in comparison. He had never seen her face, and would not until after the wedding days. He thought of her but to put her aside; she could not be as this Christian was, neither so accomplished nor courtly; besides which, it was dawning upon him that there were graces of mind and soul as well as of person, while perfection was a combination of all the graces in equal degree. Gleams of the latter had visited him while gazing into the radiant face of the Emperor's kinswoman; and how, at such favoring times, his fancy had gone out to her and come back warmed, enlivened, glorified! There is a passion of the mind and a passion of the blood; and though one and one make two, two is still a multiple of one.

Looking thus at the galley, Mahommed thought of the tales in the East not less common than in the West, and believed in them faithfully, for chivalry was merely on the wane—tales of beauteous damsels shut up in caves or adamantine castles, with guardian lions couchant at the gates, and of well–sworded heroes who marched boldly up to the brutes, and slew them, and delivered the captives always with reward. Of course, in making the application, the Princess was the prisoner, the ship the lion, and himself—well, in want of a sword, he laid hand upon his dagger, precisely as a liberating knight up to the ideal would do.

Nor was this all. The revelations of the Prince of India were still fresh to him. He wished to see his competitor. How did he look? Was there enough of him to make battle? He smiled thinking of the pleasure there would be in slyly studying the Princess and the Emperor at the same time. He drew the handkerchief down, looked at his brown–stained hands, and adjusted the folds of his burnoose. The disguise was perfect.

"Take me to the landing—there before the gate of the Good Princess," he said, with the air of a traveller above suspicion.

His resolution was taken. Challenging all chances, he would respond to the invitation of the Princess. And so completely were doubt and hesitation dismissed with our adventurer, that it was not Mahommed who

stepped from the boat where the populace was in densest assemblage, but Aboo–Obeidah, the Singing Sheik, and as such we will speak of him.

The guard at the gate, viewing him askance, detained him until he could be reported.

A fair conception of the scene presented when the Sheik stood on the floor of the portico is probably in the reader's mind; yet a glance at it may be pardoned. It was at first like a sudden introduction to an oriental garden. There were the vines, flowering shrubs, fruiting trees, many–fronded palms, and the effect of outdoors derived from the shadows of the pillars, and the sunshine streaming brilliantly through the open intervals. The tables bore proofs of the collation served upon them. Overhead was the soft creaminess of pure marble in protected state mellowed by friendly touches of time. At the end of the vista, the company was indistinctly visible through the verdure of obtruding branches. Voices came to him from that part, and gleams of bright garments; and to get to them it seemed he must pass through a viridescent atmosphere flecked with blooms, and faintly sweet with odors. For in losing the masculinity of their race the Greeks devoted themselves more and more to refined effeminacies.

Moving slowly forward under the guidance of Lysander, whose javelin beating the floor accentuated the rasping shuffle of his sandals, the Sheik came presently to a full view of the concourse.

He stopped, partly in obedience to a fine instinct of propriety teaching him he was now subject to the pleasure of his hostess, and partly to single out the royal enemy against whom he believed he was about to be pitted by destiny.

Constantine was sitting at ease, his left elbow resting on an arm of the sedilium, his forefinger supporting his cheek, his cloak across his lap. The attitude was reflective; the countenance exposed under the lifted visor of the helmet, was calm and benignant; except there was no suggestion of an evil revery holding the current of his thought, or casting a shade of uncertainty over his soul, he looked not unlike the famous Il Penseroso familiar to art–seekers in the Medici Chapel of Florence. Then the eyes of

the rivals met. The Greek was in no wise moved. How it would have been with him could he have seen through the disguise of the Sheik may never be said. On the other part, the Sheik lifted his head, and seemed taking on increase of stature. A projecting fold of the head–kerchief overhung his face, permitting nothing to be seen but red–hued cheeks, a thin beard, and eyes black and glittering. The review he felt himself undergoing did not daunt him; it only sent his pride mounting, like a leap of flame. "By the Virgin!" said one of the courtiers to another, in a louder tone than the occasion demanded. "We may indeed congratulate ourselves upon having seen the king of camel drivers." There was a disposition to laugh amongst the lighter–minded of the guests, but the Princess checked it by rising. "Bid the Sheik approach," she said, to the old domestic; and, at a sign from her, the waiting–women drew closer about her chair. The figure of the Princess clad all in white, a bracelet of plain gold upon her left arm, fillets in her hair, one red, the other blue, a double strand of pearls about her neck —this figure, with the small head, perfect in turn, set matchlessly upon the sloping shoulders, the humid eyes full of violet light, the cheeks flushed with feeling—this figure so bright in its surroundings, admitted no rivalry in attention, none in admiration; the courtiers, old and young, turned from the Sheik, and the Sheik from the Emperor. In a word, every eye centred upon the Princess, every tongue bade hush lest what she said might be lost. Etiquette required the Sheik's presentation to the Emperor first, but seeing her about to comply with the rule, he prostrated himself at her feet. As he arose, she said: "When I invited you to come and give me more of the cheer there is in your art, O Sheik, I did not know my gracious kinsman, to whom every Greek is proud and happy to be allegiant, designed visiting me to–day. I pray you will not suffer too much from his presence, but regard him a royal auditor who delights in a tale well told, and in verses when the theme and measure go lovingly together. His Majesty, the Emperor!"

"Hist! Didst hear?" whispered the Professor of Philosophy to the Professor of Rhetoric. "Thyself couldst not have spoken better."

"Ay, truly," the other answered. "Save a trifle of stiffness, the speech might have served Longinus."

With her last word, the Princess stepped aside, leaving Mahommed and Constantine front to front.

Had the Sheik been observant of the monarch's dues, he would have promptly prostrated himself; but the moment for the salutation passed, and he remained standing, answering the look he received calmly as it was given. The reader and the writer know the reason governing him; the suite, however, were not so well informed, and they began to murmur. The Princess herself appeared embarrassed.

"Lord of Constantinople," the Sheik said, seeing speech was his, "were I a Greek, or a Roman, or an Ottoman, I should make haste to kiss the floor before you, happy of the privilege; for—be the concession well noted"—he glanced deferentially around him as he spoke—"the report which the world has of you is of a kind to make it your lover. After a few days—Allah willing—I shall stand before Amurath the Sultan. Though in reverencing him I yield not to any one simply his friend, he will waive prostration from me, knowing what Your Majesty may not. In my country we cleanse the ground with our beards before no one but God. Not that we are unwilling to conform to the rules of the courts in which we find ourselves; with us it is a law—To kiss a man's hand maketh him the master; prostrate thyself to him, and without other act, thou becomest his subject. I am an Arab!"

The Sheik was not in the least defiant; on the contrary, his manner was straightforward, simple, sincere, as became one interposing conscience against an observance in itself rightful enough. Only in the last exclamation was there a perceptible emphasis, a little marked by a lift of the head and a kindling of the eyes.

"I see Your Majesty comprehends me," he said, continuing; "yet to further persuade your court, and especially the fair and high–born lady, whose guest, with all my unworthiness, I am, from believing me moved in this matter by disrespect for their sovereign, I say next, if by prostration I made myself a Roman, the act would be binding on the tribe whose Sheik I am by lawful election. And did I that, O thou whose bounties serve thy people in lieu of rain! though my hand were white, like the first Prophet's,

when, to assure the Egyptian, he drew it from his bosom, it would char blacker than dust of burned willow—then, O thou, lovelier than the queen the lost lapwing reported to Solomon! though my breath were as the odor of musk, it would poison, like an exhalation from a leper's grave—then, O my lords! like Karoon in his wickedness, I should hear Allah say of me, O Earth, swallow him! For as there are crimes and crimes, verily the chief who betrays his brethren born to the practice of freedom, shall wander between tents all his days, crying, Oh, alas! oh, alas! Who now will defend me against God?"

When the Sheik paused, as if for judgment, he was not only acquitted of intentional disrespect; the last grumbler was anxious to hear him further.

"What astonishing figures!" the Philosopher whispered to the Rhetorician. "I begin to think it true that the East hath a style of its own."

"I commend thy sagacity, my brother," the other replied. "His peroration was redolent of the Koran—A wonderful fellow nevertheless!"

Presently the whole concourse was looking at the Emperor, with whom it rested whether the Sheik should be dismissed or called on for entertainment.

"Daughter," said Constantine to the Princess, "I know not enough of the tribal law of thy guest to have an opinion of the effect upon him and his of the observance of our ancient ceremony; wherefore we are bound to accept his statement. Moreover it does not become our dignity to acquire subjects and dominion, were they ever so desirable, in a method justly liable to impeachment for treachery and coercion. Besides which—and quite as important, situated as we are—thy hospitality is to be defended."

Here the Sheik, who had been listening to the Emperor, and closely observing him, thrice lightly clapped his hands.

"It remains for us, therefore, to waive the salutation in this instance."

A ripple of assent proceeded from the suite.

"And now, daughter," Constantine pursued, "thy guest being present to give thee of his lore, it may be he will be pleased to have us of his audience as well. Having heard much of such performances, and

remembering their popularity when we were in our childhood, we will esteem ourselves fortunate if now favored by one highly commended as a master in his guild."

The Sheik's eyes sparkled brighter as he answered, "It is written for us in our Holiest, the very Word of the Compassionate,—'If ye are greeted with a greeting, then greet ye with a better greeting, or at least return it.' Verily my Lord dispenseth honor with so light a hand as not to appear aware of the doing. When my brethren under the black tents are told of my having won the willing ear of their Majesties of Byzantium and Adrianople, they will think of me as one who has been permitted to walk in the light of two suns simultaneous in shining."

So saying, he bowed very low.

"My only unhappiness now is in not knowing the direction in which my Lord's preferences run; for as a stream goes here and there, but all the time keeps one general course, seeking the sea, so with taste; though it yield a nod now, and then a smile, it hath always a deeper delight for the singer's finding. I have the gay and serious—history, traditions—the heroics of men and nations, their heart–throbs in verse and prose—all or any for the Lord of Constantinople and his kinswoman, my hostess,—may her life never end until the song of the dove ceases to be heard in the land!"

"What say you, my friends?" asked Constantine, glancing graciously at those around him.

Then they looked from him to the Princess, and in thought of the betrothal, replied, "Love—something of love!"

"No," he returned, unflinchingly. "We are youths no longer. There is enlightenment in the traditions of nations. Our neighbors, the Turks—what hast thou of them, Sheik?"

"Didst thou hear?" said Notaras to one at his elbow. "He hath recanted; the Empress will not be a Greek."

There was no answer; for the Sheik, baring his head, hung the kerchief and cord upon his arm, preliminaries which gave him perfectly to view. A swarthy face; hair black, profuse, closely cut along the temples; features

delicate but manly—these the bystanders saw in a general way, being more attracted by the repressed fire in the man's eyes, and his air high and severely noble.

When the Princess caught sight of the countenance, she fell into a confusion. She had seen it, but where and when? The instant he was beginning he gazed at her, and in the exchange of glances she was reminded of the Governor bidding her adieu on the shore of the Sweet Waters. But he was youthful, while this one—could it be he was old? The feeling was a repetition of that she had in the Castle when the storyteller appeared the first time.

"I will tell how the Turks became a Nation."

Then, in Greek but a little broken, the Sheik began a recital.

ALAEDDIN AND ERTOGHRUL

I

A tale of Ertoghrul!—
    How when the Chief
Lay one day nooning with his stolen herds,
A sound of drumming smote him from the East,
And while he stood to see what came of it,
The West with like notes fainter, echo–like,
Made answer; then two armies rode in view,
Horses and men in steel, the sheen of war
About them and above, and wheeling quick
From column into line, drew all their blades,
Shook all their flags, and charged and lost themselves
In depths of dusty clouds, which yet they tore
With blinding gleams of light, and yells of rage,
And cheers so high and hoarse they well might seem
The rolling thunder of a mountain storm.
Long time the hosts contended; but at last
The lesser one began to yield the ground,
Oppressed in front, and on its flanks o'erwhelmed:
And hasted then the end, a piteous sight,

Most piteous to the very brave who know
From lessons of their lives, how seldom 'tis
Despair can save where valor fails to win.
Then Ertoghrul aroused him, touched to heart.

"My children, mount, and out with cimeter!
I know not who these are, nor whence they come;
Nor need we care. 'Twas Allah led them here,
And we will honor Him—and this our law;
What though the weak may not be always right,
We'll make it always right to help the weak.
Deep take the stirrups now, and ride with me,
Allah–il–Allah!"

Thus spake Ertoghrul;
And at the words, with flying reins, and all
His eager tribe, four hundred sworded men,
Headlong he rode against the winning host.

II

Beneath the captured flags, the spoils in heaps
Around him laid, the rescued warrior stood,
A man of kingly mien, while to him strode
His unexpected friend.

"Now who art thou?"
The first was first to ask.

"Sheik Ertoghrul
Am I."

"The herds I see—who calls them his?"

Laughed Ertoghrul, and showed his cimeter.
"The sword obeys my hand, the hand my will,
And given will and hand and sword, I pray
Thee tell me, why should any man be poor?"

"And whose the plain?"

"Comes this way one a friend
Of mine, and leaves his slippers at my door,
Why then, 'tis his."
"And whose the hills that look
Upon the plain?"

"My flocks go there at morn,
And thence they come at night—I take my right
Of Allah."

"No," the stranger mildly said,
"'Twas Allah made them mine."

Frowned Ertoghrul,
While darkened all the air; but from his side
Full pleasantly the stranger took a sword,
Its carven hilt one royal emerald,
Its blade both sides with legends overwrought,
Some from the Koran, some from Solomon,
All by the cunning Eastern maker burned
Into the azure steel–his sword he took,
And held it, belt, and scabbard too, in sign
Of gift.

"The herds, the plain, the hills were mine;
But take thou them, and with them this in proof
Of title."

Lifted Ertoghrul his brows,
And opened wide his eyes.

"Now who art thou?"
He asked in turn.

"Oh, I am Alaeddin—
Sometimes they call me Alaeddin the Great."

"I take thy gifts—the herds, the plain, the hills,"
Said Ertoghrul; "and so I take the sword;
But none the less, if comes a need, 'tis thine.

Let others call thee Alaeddin the Great;
To me and mine thou'rt Alaeddin the Good
And Great."

With that, he kissed the good King's hand;
And making merry, to the Sheik's dowar
They rode. And thus from nothing came the small;
And now the lonely vale which erst ye knew,
And scorned, because it nursed the mountain's feet,
Doth cradle mornings on the mountain's top.

Mishallah!

The quiet which held the company through the recitation endured a space afterwards, and—if the expression be allowed—was in itself a commentary upon the performance.

"Where is our worthy Professor of Rhetoric?" asked Constantine.

"Here, Your Majesty," answered the man of learning, rising.

"Canst thou not give us a lecture upon the story with which thy Arabian brother hath favored us?"

"Nay, sire, criticism, to deal justly, waiteth until the blood is cool. If the Sheik will honor me with a copy of his lines, I will scan and measure them by the rules descended to us from Homer, and his Attic successors."

The eyes of the Emperor fell next upon the moody, discontented face of Duke Notaras.

"My lord Admiral, what sayest thou of the tale?"

"Of the tale, nothing; of the story–teller—I think him an insolent, and had I my way, Your Majesty, he should have a plunge in the Bosphorus."

Presuming the Sheik unfamiliar with Latin, the Duke couched his reply in that tongue; yet the former raised his head, and looked at the speaker, his eyes glittering with intelligence—and the day came, and soon, when the utterance was relentlessly punished.

"I do not agree with you, my Lord," Constantine said, in a melancholy tone. "Our fathers, whether we look for them on the Roman or the Greek

side, might have played the part of Ertoghrul. His was the spirit of conquest. Would we had enough of it left to get back our own!—Sheik," he added, "what else hast thou in the same strain? I have yet a little time to spare—though it shall be as our hostess saith."

"Nay," she answered, with deference, "there is but one will here."

And taking assent from her, the Sheik began anew.

EL JANN AND HIS PARABLE

Bismillah!

Ertoghrul pursued a wolf,
And slew it on the range's tallest peak,
Above the plain so high there was nor grass
Nor even mosses more. And there he sat
Him down awhile to rest; when from the sky,
Or the blue ambiency cold and pure,
Or maybe from the caverns of the earth
Where Solomon the King is wont to keep
The monster Genii hearkening his call,
El Jann, vast as a cloud, and thrice as black,
Appeared and spoke—

"Art thou Sheik Ertoghrul?"

And he undaunted answered: "Even so."

"Well, I would like to come and sit with thee."

"Thou seest there is not room for both of us."

"Then rise, I say, and get thee part way down
The peak."

"'Twere easier," laughed Ertoghrul,
"Madest thou thyself like me as thin and small;
And I am tired."

A rushing sound ran round and up
And down the height, most like the whir of wings
Through tangled trees of forests old and dim.
A moment thus—the time a crisped leaf,
Held, armlength overhead, will take to fall—
And then a man was sitting face to face
With Ertoghrul.

"This is the realm of snow,"
He said, and smiled—"a place from men secure,
Where only eagles fearless come to nest,
And summer with their young."

The Sheik replied,
"It was a wolf—a gaunt gray wolf, which long
Had fattened on my flocks—that lured me here.
I killed it."

"On thy spear I see no blood;
And where, O Sheik, the carcass of the slain?
I see it not."

Around looked Ertoghrul—
There was no wolf; and at his spear—
Upon its blade no blood. Then rose his wrath,
A mighty pulse.

"The spear hath failed its trust—
I'll try the cimeter."

A gleam of light—
A flitting, wind–borne spark in murk of night—
Then fell the sword, the gift of Alaeddin;
Edge–first it smote the man upon his crown—
Between his eyes it shore, nor staying there,
It cut his smile in two—and not yet spent,
But rather gaining force, through chin and chine,
And to the very stone on which he sat

It clove, and finished with a bell–like clang
Of silvern steel 'gainst steel.

"Aha! Aha!"—
But brief the shout; for lo! there was no stain
Upon the blade withdrawn, nor moved the man,
Nor changed he look or smile.

"I was the wolf
That ran before thee up the mountain side;
'Twas I received thy spear as now thy sword;
And know thou further, Sheik, nor wolf nor man
Am I, nor mortal thing of any kind;
Only a thought of Allah's. Canst thou kill
A thought divine? Not Solomon himself
Could that, except with thought yet more divine.
Yield thee thy rage; and when thou think'st of me
Hereafter, be it as of one, a friend,
Who brought a parable, and made display
Before thee, saying—
"Lo! what Allah wills."

Therewith he dropped a seed scarce visible
Into a little heap of sand and loam
Between them drawn.

"Lo! Allah wills."

And straight
The dust began to stir as holding life.
Again El Jann—

"Behold what Allah wills!"

A tiny shoot appeared; a waxen point
Close shawled in many folds of wax as white,
It might have been a vine to humbly creep—
A lily soon to sunward flare its stars—
A shrub to briefly coquette with the winds.
Again the cabalism—

"Lo! Allah's will."

The apparition budded, leafed, and branched,
And with a flame of living green lit all
The barrenness about. And still it grew—
Until it touched the pillars of the earth,
And lapped its boundaries, the far and near,
And under it, as brethren in a tent,
The nations made their home, and dwelt in peace
Forever.

"Lo!"—

And Ertoghrul awoke.

Mishallah!

This recitation commanded closer attention than the first one. Each listener had a feeling that the parable at the end, like all true parables, was of continuous application, while its moral was in some way aimed at him.

The looks the Sheik received were by no means loving. The spell was becoming unpleasant. Then the Emperor arose, as did the Princess, to whom, as hostess, the privilege of sitting had been alone conceded.

"Our playtime is up—indeed, I fear, it has been exceeded," he said, glancing at the Dean, who was acting master of ceremonies.

The Dean responded with a bow low as his surroundings admitted; whereupon the Emperor went to the Princess, and said, "We will take leave now, daughter, and for myself and my lords of the court, I acknowledge a most agreeable visit, and thank you for it."

She respectfully saluted the hand he extended to her.

"Our gate and doors at Blacherne are always open to you."

The adieu was specially observed by the courtiers, and they subsequently pronounced it decorous for a sovereign, cordial as became a relative, but most un–loverlike. Indeed, it was a strong point in the decision subsequently of general acceptance, by which His Majesty was relieved of the proposal of marriage to the Princess.

The latter took his offered arm, and accompanied him to the steps of the portico, where, when he had descended, the lords one by one left a kiss on her hand.

Nor should it be forgotten, that as Constantine was passing the Sheik, he paused to say to him in his habitually kind and princely manner: "The tree Sheik Ertoghrul saw in his dream has spread, and is yet spreading, but its shadow has not compassed all the nations; and while God keeps me, it will not. Had not I myself invited the parable, it might have been offensive. For the instruction and entertainment given me, accept thou this—and go in peace."

The Sheik took the ring offered him, and the gaze with which he followed the imperial giver was suggestive of respect and pity.

CHAPTER XX

MAHOMMED DREAMS

It was a trifle after noon. The trireme and the assemblage of admiring townspeople had disappeared, leaving the bay and its shores to their wonted quiet. The palace, however, nestling in the garden under the promontory, must be permitted to hold our interest longer.

Aboo–Obeidah had eaten and drunk, for being on a journey, he was within the license of the law as respects wine; and now he sat with the Princess alone at the end of the portico lately occupied by the Emperor and his suite. A number of her attendants amused themselves out of hearing of the two, though still within call. She occupied the sedilium; he a seat by the table near her. Save a fine white veil on an arm and a fan which she seldom used, her appearance was as in the morning.

It is to be admitted now that the Princess was finding a pleasure in the society of the Sheik. If aware of the fact, which was doubtful, it is still more doubtful if she could have explained it. We are inclined to think the mystery attaching to the man had as much to do with the circumstance as the man himself. He was polite, engaging, and handsome; the objection to his complexion, if such there were, was at least offset by a very positive faculty of entertaining; besides which, the unspeakable something in manner, always baffling disguises, always whispering of other conditions, always exciting suggestions and expectations, was present here.

If she thought him the Bedouin he assumed to be, directly a word changed the opinion; did she see the Governor of the old Castle in his face, an allusion or a bit of information dropped by him unaware spoke of association far beyond such a subordinate; most perplexing, however, where got the man his intelligence? Did learning like his, avoiding cloisters, academies, and teachers of classical taste, comport with camel–driving and tent–life in deserts harried by winds and sand?

The mystery, together with the effort to disentangle it, resolved the Princess into an attentive auditor. The advantages in the conversation were consequently with the Sheik; and he availed himself of them to lead as he chose.

"You have heard, O Princess, of the sacred fig–tree of the Hindus?"

"No."

"In one of their poems—the Bhagavad Gita, I think—it is described as having its roots above and its branches downward; thus drawing life from the sky and offering its fruit most conveniently, it is to me the symbol of a good and just king. It rose to my mind when thy kinsman—may Allah be thrice merciful to him!—passed me with his speech of forgiveness, and this gift"—he raised his hand, and looked at the ring on one of the fingers–"in place of which I was more deserving burial in the Bosphorus, as the black–browed Admiral said."

A frown dark as the Admiral's roughened his smooth brow.

"Why so?" she inquired.

"The tales I told were of a kind to be spared a Greek, even one who may not cover his instep with the embroidered buskin of an Emperor."

"Nay, Sheik, they did not ruffle him. On the tongue of a Turk, I admit, the traditions had been boastful, but you are not a Turk."

The remark might have been interrogative; wherefore with admirable address, he replied: "An Ottoman would see in me an Arab wholly unrelated to him, except as I am a Moslem. Let it pass, O Princess—he forgave me. The really great are always generous. When I took the ring, I thought, Now would the young Mahommed have so lightly pardoned the provocation?"

"Mahommed!" she said.

"Not the Prophet," he answered; "but the son of Amurath."

"Ah, you know him?"

"I have sat with him, O Princess, and at table often helped him to meat and bread. I have been his cupbearer and taster, and as frequently shared his outdoor sports; now hunting with hawk, and now with hound. Oh, it

were worth a year of common days to gallop at his right hand, and exult with him when the falcon, from its poise right under the sun, drops itself like an arrow upon its enemy! I have discoursed with him also on themes holy and profane, and given and taken views, and telling him tales in prose and verse, have seen the day go out, then come again. In knightly practice I have tilted with him, and more than once, by his side in battle, loosened rein at the same cry and charged. His Sultana mother knows him well; but, by the lions and the eagles who served Solomon, I know him, beginning where her knowledge left off—that is, where the horizon of manhood stretched itself to make room for his enlarging soul."

The awakening curiosity of his listener was not lost upon the Sheik.

"You are surprised to hear a kindly speech of the son of Amurath," he said.

She flushed slightly.

"I am not a person, Sheik, whose opinions are dangerous to the peace of States, and of whom diplomacy is required; yet it would grieve me to give offence to you or your friend, the Prince Mahommed. If now I concede a wish to have some further knowledge of one who is shortly to inherit the most powerful of the Eastern Kingdoms, the circumstance ought not to subject me to harsh judgment."

"Princess," the Sheik said, "nothing so becomes a woman as care where words may be the occasion of mischief. As a flower in a garden, such a woman would rank as the sovereign rose; as a bird, she would be the bulbul, the sweetest of singers, and in beauty, a heron with throat of snow, and wings of pink and scarlet; as a star, she would be the first of the evening, and the last to pale in the morning—nay, she would be a perpetual morning. Of all fates what more nearly justifies reproach of Allah than to have one's name and glory at the mercy of a rival or an enemy? I am indeed Mahommed's friend—I know him—I will defend him, where sacred truth permits defence. And then"—his glance fell, and he hesitated.

"And what then?" she asked.

He gave her a grateful look, and answered: "I am going to Adrianople. The Prince will be there, and can I tell him of this audience, and that the

Princess Irene regrets the evil reported of him in Constantinople, and is not his enemy, straightway he will number himself of those the most happy and divinely remembered, whose books are to be given them in their right hands."

The Princess looked at the singer, her countenance clear, serene, fair as a child's, and said:

"I am the enemy of no one living. Report me so to him. The Master I follow left a law by which all men and women are neighbors whom I am to love and pray for as I love and pray for myself. Deliver him the very words, O Sheik, and he will not misunderstand me."

A moment after she asked:

"But tell me more of him. He is making the world very anxious."

"Princess," the Sheik began, "Ebn Hanife was a father amongst Dervishes, and he had a saying, 'Ye shall know a plant by its flower, a vine by its fruit, and a man by his acts; what he does being to the man as the flower to the plant, and the fruit to the vine; if he have done nothing, prove him by his tastes and preferences, for what he likes best that he will do when left to himself.' By these tests let us presume to try the Prince Mahommed… There is nothing which enthralls us like the exercise of power—nothing we so nearly carry with us into the tomb to be a motive there; for who shall say it has not a part in the promise of resurrection? If so, O Princess, what praise is too great for him who, a young man placed upon a throne by his father, comes down from it at his father's call?"

"Did Mahommed that?"

"Not once, O Princess, but twice."

"In so much at least his balance should be fair."

"To whom is the pleasant life in a lofty garden, its clusters always near at hand—to whom, if not to the just judges of their fellow–men?"

The Sheik saluted her twice by carrying his right hand to his beard, then to his forehead.

"Attend again, O Princess," he continued, more warmly than in the outset. "Mahommed is devoted to learning. At night in the field when the

watches are set, the story–tellers, poets, philosophers, lawyers, preachers, experts in foreign tongues, and especially the inventors of devices, a class by themselves, supposed generally to live on dreams as others on bread—all these, finding welcome in his tent, congregate there. His palace in the city is a college, with recitations and lectures and instructive conversations. The objection his father recognized the times he requested him to vacate the throne was that he was a student. His ancestors having been verse makers, poetry is his delight; and if he does not rival them in the gentle art, he surpasses them in the number of his acquirements. The Arab, the Hebrew, the Greek, the Latin address him and have answers each in his mother's tongue. Knew you ever a scholar, O Princess, whose soul had utterly escaped the softening influence of thought and study? It is not learning which tames the barbarian so much as the diversion of mind from barbaric modes required of him while in the pursuit of learning."

She interrupted him, saying pleasantly: "I see, O Sheik, if to be at the mercy of an enemy is sad, how fortunate where one's picture is intended if the artist be a friend. Where had the Prince his instructors?"

There was a lurking smile in the Sheik's eyes, as he replied: "The sands in my country drink the clouds dry, and leave few fountains except of knowledge. The Arab professors in Cordova, whom the Moorish Kaliphs deemed themselves honored in honoring, were not despised by the Bishops of Rome. Amurath, wanting teachers for Mahommed, invited the best of them to his court. Ah—if I had the time!"

Observing his sigh had not failed its mark, he continued: "I would speak of some of the books I have seen on the Prince's table; for as a licensed friend, I have been in his study. Indeed, but for fear of too greatly recommending myself, I would have told you earlier, O Princess, how he favoured me as one of his teachers."

"Of poetry and story–telling, I suppose?"

"Why not?" he asked. "Our history is kept and taught in such forms. Have we a hero not himself a poet, he keeps one… Upon the Prince's table, in the central place, objects of his reverence, the sources to which he most frequently addresses himself when in need of words and happy turns of

expression, his standards of comparison for things beautiful in writing and speech, mirrors of the Most Merciful, whispering galleries wherein the voice of the Most Compassionate is never silent, are the Koran, with illustrations in gold, and the Bible in Hebrew, copied from *torahs* of daily use in the Synagogues."

"The Bible in Hebrew! Does he read it?"

"Like a Jewish elder."

"And the Gospels?"

The Sheik's face became reproachful.

"Art thou—even thou, O Princess—of those who believe a Moslem must reject Christ because the Prophet of Islam succeeded him with later teachings?"

Dropping then into the passionless manner, he continued:

"The Koran does not deny Christ or his Gospels. Hear what it says of itself: 'And this Koran is not a forgery of one who is no God, but it hath been sent down as a confirmation of those books which have been before it, and an explanation of the Scriptures from the Lord of the Worlds.'**[22]** … That verse, O Princess, transcribed by the Prince Mahommed himself, lies between the Bible and the Koran; the two being, as I have said, always together upon his table."

"What then is his faith?" she asked, undisguisedly interested.

"Would he were here to declare it himself!"

This was said disconsolately; then the Sheik broke out:

"The truth now of the son of Amurath! Listen!—He believes in God. He believes in the Scriptures and the Koran, holding them separate wings of the divine Truth by which the world is to attain righteousness. He believes there have been three Prophets specially in the confidence of God: Moses, the first one; Jesus, who was greater than Moses; Mahomet, the very greatest—not for speaking better or sublimer things, but because he was last in their order of coming. Above all, O Princess, he believes worship due to the Most High alone; therefore he prays the prayer of Islam, God is

God, and Mahomet is his Prophet—meaning that the Prophet is not to be mistaken for God."

The Sheik raised his dark eyes, and upon meeting them the Princess looked out over the bay. That she was not displeased was the most he could read in her face, the youthful light of which was a little shaded by thinking. He waited for her to speak.

"There were other books upon the Prince's table?" she presently asked.

"There were others, O Princess."

"Canst thou name some of them?"

The Sheik bowed profoundly.

"I see the pearls of Ebn Hanife's saying were not wasted. Mahommed is now to be tried by his tastes and preferences. Let it be so… I saw there, besides dictionaries Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, the Encyclopaedia of Sciences, a rare and wonderful volume by a Granadian Moor, Ibn Abdallah. I saw there the Astronomy and Astronomical Tables of Ibn Junis, and with them a silver globe perfected from the calculations of Almamon the Kaliph, which helps us to the geographical principle not yet acknowledged in Rome, that the earth is round. I saw there the Book of the Balance of Wisdom by Alhazan, who delved into the laws of nature until there is nothing phenomenal left. I saw there the Philosophy of Azazzali the Arab, for which both Christian and Moslem should be grateful, since it has given Philosophy its true place by exalting it into a handmaiden of Religion. I saw there books treating of trade and commerce, of arms and armor, and machines for the assault and defence of cities, of military engineering, and the conduct of armies in grand campaigns, of engineering not military, dealing with surveying, and the construction of highways, aqueducts, and bridges, and the laying out of towns. There, also, because the soul of the student must have rest and diversion, I saw volumes of songs and music loved by lovers in every land, and drawings of mosques, churches and palaces, masterpieces of Indian and Saracenic genius; and of gardens there was the Zebra, created by Abderrahman for the best loved of his Sultanas. Of poetry, O Princess, I saw many books, the lord of them a

copy of Homer in Arabic, executed on ivory from the translation ordered by Haroun Al–Raschid."

During this recital the Princess scarcely moved. She was hearing a new version of Mahommed; and the Sheik, like a master satisfied with his premises, proceeded to conclusions.

"My Lord has a habit of dreaming, and he does not deny it—he believes in it. In his student days, he called it his rest. He used to say, when his brain reeled in overtask dreaming was a pillow of down and lavender; that in moments of despair, dreaming took his spirit in its hands softer than air, and, nurse–like, whispered and sung to it, and presently it was strong again. Not many mornings ago he awoke to find that in a deep sleep some ministrant had come to him, and opened the doors of his heart, and let out its flock of boyish fantasies. He has since known but three visions. Would it please you, O Princess, to hear of them? They may be useful as threads on which to hang the Dervish father's pearls of saying."

She re–settled herself, resting her cheek on her hand, and her elbow on the arm of the chair, and replied:

"I will hear of them."

"The visions have all of them reference to the throne he is soon to ascend, without which they would be the mere jingling of a jester's rattle."

"First Vision… He will be a hero. If his soul turned from war, he were not his father's son. But unlike his father, he holds war the servant of peace, and peace the condition essential to his other visions."

"Second Vision… He believes his people have the genius of the Moors, and he will cultivate it in rivalry of that marvellous race."

"Of the Moors, O Sheik?" the Princess said, interrupting him. "Of the Moors? I have always heard of them as pillagers of sacred cities— infidels sunk in ignorance, who stole the name of God to excuse invasions and the spilling of rivers of blood."

The Sheik lifted his head haughtily.

"I am an Arab, and the Moors are Arabs translated from the East to the West."

"I crave thy pardon," she said, gently.

And calming himself, he rejoined: "If I weary you, O Princess, there are other subjects to which I can turn. My memory is like the box of sandal–wood a lady keeps for her jewelry. I can open it at will, and always find something to please—better probably because I have it from another."

"No," she returned, artlessly, "a hero in actual life transcends the best of fancies—and besides, Sheik, you spoke of a third vision of your friend, the Prince Mahommed."

He dropped his eyes lest she should see the brightness with which they filled.

"War, my Lord says, is a necessity which, as Sultan, he cannot avoid. Were he disposed to content himself with the empire descending from his great father, envious neighbors would challenge him to the field. He must prove his capacity in defence. That done, he vows to tread the path made white and smooth by Abderrahman, the noblest and best of the Western Kaliphs. He will set out by founding a capital somewhere on the Bosphorus. Such, O Princess, is my Lord Mahommed's Third Vision."

"Nay, Sheik—on the Marmora—at Broussa, perhaps."

"I am giving the Vision as he gave it to me, Princess. For where else, he asks, has the spreading earth diviner features than on the Bosphorus? Where bends a softer sky above a friendlier channel by Nature moulded for nobler uses? Where are there seas so bridled and reduced? Does not the rose bloom here all the year? Yonder the East, here the West—must they be strangers and enemies forever? His capital, he declares, shall be for their entertainment as elder and younger brother. Within its walls, which he will build strong as a mountain's base, with gates of brass invulnerable, and towers to descry the clouds below the horizon, he will collect unselfishly whatever is good and beautiful, remembering he serves Allah best who serves his fellow–men."

"All his fellow–men, Sheik?"

"All of them."

Then she glanced over the bay, and said very softly:

"It is well; for 'if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others?'"

The Sheik smiled, saying:

"And thus the latest Prophet, O Princess. 'Turn away evil by that which is better; and lo, he between whom and thyself was enmity, shall become as though he were a warm friend.'"**[23]**

She answered, "A goodly echo."

"Shall I proceed?" he then asked.

"Yes."

"I was speaking of the Third Vision… To make his capital the centre of the earth, he will have a harbor where ships from every country, and all at once, can come and lie, oars slung and sails furled: and near by for trade, a bazaar with streets of marble, and roofed with glass, and broad and long enough for a city unto itself; and in the midst a khan for lodging the merchants and travellers who have not other houses. And as did Abderrahman, he will build a University of vast enclosure; here temples, there groves; nor may a study be named without its teacher, and he the most famous; so the votaries of Music and Poetry, Philosophy, Science, and the Arts, and the hundred–handed Mechanics shall dwell together like soldiers in a holy league. And comes that way one religious, of him but a question, Believest thou in God? and if he answer yes, then for him a ready welcome. For of what moment is it, my Lord asks, whether God bear this name or that? Or be worshipped with or without form? Or on foot or knee? Or whether the devout be called together by voice or bell? Is not Faith everything?"

The picture wrought upon the Princess. Her countenance was radiant, and she said half to herself, but so the Sheik heard her:

"It is a noble Vision."

Then the Sheik lowered his voice:

"If, with such schemes, excluding races and religions—hear me again, O Princess!—if with such schemes or visions, as thou wilt, the Lord

Mahommed allows himself one selfish dream, wouldst thou condemn him?"

"What is the selfish dream?" she asked.

"He has an open saying, Princess, 'Light is the life of the world, while Love is the light of life.' Didst thou ever hear how Othman wooed and won his Malkatoon?"

"No."

"It is a Turkish tale of love. Mahommed had it from his mother when he was a lad, and he has been haunted ever since with a belief which, to his dreaming, is like the high window in the eastern front of a palace, outwardly the expression–giver, within the principal source of light. The idea is strongest what times the moon is in the full; and then he mounts a horse, and hies him, as did Othman, to some solitary place where, with imagination for cup–bearer, he drinks himself into happy drunkenness." The Sheik, bending forward, caught her eyes with his, and held them so not a glance escaped him.

"He thinks—and not all the Genii, the winged and the unwinged, of the wisest of Kings could win him from the thought—that he will sometime meet a woman who will have the mind, the soul of souls, and the beauty of the most beautiful. When she will cross his vision is one of the undelivered scriptories which Time is bringing him; yet he is looking for her, and the more constantly because the first sight of her will be his first lesson in the mystery called love. He will know her, for at seeing her a lamp will light itself in his heart, and by it, not the glare of the sun, his spirit will make sure of her spirit. Therefore in his absoluteness of faith, O Princess, there is a place already provided for her in his promised capital, and even now he calls it this House of Love. Ah, what hours he has spent planning that abode! He will seat it in the Garden of Perfection, for the glorifying which, trees, birds, flowers, summer–houses, water, hill–tops and shaded vales shall be conquered. Has he not studied the Zehra of Abderrahman? And divided it as it was into halls, courts and chambers, and formed and proportioned each, and set and reset its thousand and more columns, and restored the pearls and gold on its walls, and over the wide

Alhambran arches hung silken doors sheened like Paradisean birds? And all that when he shall have found her, his Queen, his Malkatoon, his Spirit of Song, his Breath of Flowers, his Lily of Summer, his Pearl of Oman, his Moon of Radjeb, monotony shall never come where she dwells nor shall she sigh except for him absent. Such, O Princess Irene, is the one dream the Prince has builded with the world shut out. Does it seem to you a vanity of wickedness?"

"No," she returned, and covered her face, for the Sheik's look was eager and burning bright.

He knelt then, and kissed the marble at her feet.

"I am Prince Mahommed's ambassador, O Princess," he said, rising to his knees. "Forgive me, if I have dared delay the announcement."

"His ambassador! To what end?"

"I am afraid and trembling."

He kissed the floor again.

"Assure me of pardon—if only to win me back my courage. It is miserable to be shaken with fear."

"Thou hast done nothing, Sheik, unless drawing thy master's portrait too partially be an offence. Speak out."

"It is not three days, Princess, since you were Mahommed's guest."

"I his guest—Mahommed's!"

She arose from her chair.

"He received you at the White Castle."

"And the Governor?"

"He was the Governor."

She sunk back overcome with astonishment. The Sheik recalled her directly.

"Prince Mahommed," he said, "arrived at the Castle when the boats were discovered, and hastened to the landing to render assistance if the peril required it… And now, O Princess, my tongue falters. How can I without offending tell of the excitement into which seeing you plunged him?

Suffer me to be direct. His first impression was supported by the coincidences—your coming and his, so nearly at the same instant—the place of the meeting so out of the way and strange—the storm seemingly an urgency of Heaven. Beholding and hearing you, 'This is she! This is she! My Queen, my Malkatoon!' he cried in his heart. And yesterday"—

"Nay, Sheik, allow the explanation to wait. Bearest thou a message from him to me?"

"He bade me salute thee, Princess Irene, as if thou wert now the Lady of his House of Love in his Garden of Perfection, and to pray if he might come and in person kiss thy hand, and tell thee his hopes, and pour out at thy feet his love in heartfuls larger than ever woman had from man."

While speaking, the Sheik would have given his birthright to have seen her face.

Then, in a low voice, she asked:

"Does he doubt I am a Christian?"

The tone was not of anger; with beatings of heart trebly quickened, he hastened to reply:

"'That she is a Christian'—may God abandon my mouth, if I quote him unfaithfully!—'That she is a Christian, I love her the more. For see you, Sheik'—by the faith of an Arab, Princess, I quote him yet, word for word—'my mother was a Christian.'"

In the morning of this very day we have seen her put to like question by Constantine, and she did not hesitate; now the reply took a time.

"Say to Prince Mahommed," she at length returned, "that his message presents itself honorably, for which it is deserving a soft answer. His fancy has played him false. I cannot be the woman of his dream. She is young; I am old, though not with years. She is gay; I am serious. She is in love with life, hopeful, joyous; I was born to sorrow, and in sorrow brought up, and the religion which absorbed my youth is now life's hold on me. She will be delighted with the splendors he has in store for her; so might I, had not the wise man long since caught my ear and judgment by the awful text, Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. While her charms endure she will keep him

charmed with the world; I could not so much, for the world to come has possession of me, and the days here are but so many of a journey thither. Tell him, O Sheik, while he has been dreaming of palaces and gardens in rivalry of Abderrahman the Kaliph, I have been dreaming of a house in splendor beyond the conception of architects; and asks he more about it, tell him I know it only as a house not made with hands. Tell him I speak not in denial of possibilities; for by the love I have never failed to accord the good and noble, I might bend my soul to his; to this hour, however, God and His Son the Christ, and the Holy Mother, and the Angels and deserving men and women have taken up my heart and imagination, and in serving them I have not aspired to other happiness. A wife I might become, not from temptation of gain or power, or in surrender to love—I speak not in derision of the passion, since, like the admitted virtues, it is from God—nay, Sheik, in illustration of what may otherwise be of uncertain meaning to him, tell Prince Mahommed I might become his wife could I by so doing save or help the religion I profess. Then, if I brought him love, the sacrifice would rescue it from every taint. Canst thou remember all this? And wilt thou deliver it truly?"

The Sheik's demeanor when she ended was greatly changed; his head was quite upon his breast; his attitude and whole appearance were disconsolate to the last degree.

"Alas, Princess! How can I carry such speech to him, whose soul is consuming with hunger and thirst for thy favor?"

"Sheik," she said in pity, "no master, I think, had ever a more faithful servant than thou hast proved thyself. Thy delivery of his message, could it be preserved, would be a model for heralds in the future."

Thereupon she arose, extended her hand to him, and he kissed it; and as she remained standing, he arose also.

"Be seated," she then said, and immediately that they were both in their chairs again, she took direction of the interview.

"You asked me, Sheik, if I had heard how Othman wooed and won his Malkatoon, and said it was a Turkish romance. The Othman, I take it, was

founder of Prince Mahommed's house. Now, if thou art not too weary, tell me the story."

As the recital afforded him the opportunities to give poetic expression to his present feeling, he accepted the suggestion gladly, and, being in the right mood, was singularly effective. Half the time listening she was in tears. It was past three o'clock when he finished. The audience then terminated. In no part of it had her manner been more gracious than when she conducted him along the portico, or her loveliness so overwhelming as when she bade him adieu at the head of the steps.

Standing between columns near the sedilium, she saw him gain his boat, take something from the sitting–box, step ashore again, and return to her gate, where he remained awhile pounding with a stone. The action was curious, and when he was out of sight rounding the water front of the promontory, she sent Lysander to investigate.

"The infidel has fixed a brass plate to the right–hand post of the kiosk," the ancient reported, in bad humor. "It may be a curse." The Princess then called her attendants, and went with them to see the brass plate. There it was, an arm's reach overhead, and affixed firmly to the post, the corners turned down to serve the tacking. Graven on its polished surface was the following:

[Illustration]

Wholly unable to decipher it, she sent for a Dervish, long resident in the town, and returned to the portico.

"Princess," the old man said, having viewed the mysterious plate, "he who did the posting was a Turk; and if he were aged, I should say thou hast entertained unaware the great Amurath, Sultan of Sultans."

"But the man was young."

"Then was he the son of Amurath, Prince Mahommed."

The Princess turned pale.

"How canst thou speak so positively?" she asked.

"It is a *teukra*; in the whole world, O Princess, there are but two persons with authority to make use of it."

"And who are they?"

"The Sultan, and Mahommed, next him in the succession."

In the silence which ensued, Lysander officiously proposed to remove the sign. The Dervish interposed.

"Wilt thou hear me, O Princess," he said, with a low reverence, "whether the plate proceeded from Amurath or Mahommed, or by the order of either of them, the leaving it behind signifies more than friendship or favor—it is a safeguard—a proclamation that thou and thy people and property here are under protection of the master of all the Turks. Were war to break out to–morrow, thou mightest continue in thy palace and garden with none to make thee afraid save thine own countrymen. Wherefore consider well before acceding to the rancor of this ancient madman."

Thus the truth came to the Princess Irene. The Singing Sheik was Prince Mahommed!

Twice he had appeared before her; in the White Castle once, and now in her palace; and having announced himself her lover, and proposed marriage, he intended her to know him, and also that he was not departing in despair. Hence the plate on the gate! The circumstance was novel and surprising. Her present feelings were too vague and uncertain for definition: but she was not angry.

Meantime Mahommed, returning to the old Castle, debated with himself. He loved the Princess Irene with the passion of a soul unused to denial or disappointment, and before he reached the Roumelian Hissar he swore a Moslem oath to conquer Constantinople, less for Islam and glory, than for her. And from that hour the great accomplishment took hold of him to the exclusion of all else.

At Hissar he ascended the mountain, and, standing on the terreplein of the precipice in front of what is now Robert College, he marked the narrowness of the Bosphorus below, and thinking of the military necessity for a crossing defended on both shores, he selected a site for a castle on the European side opposite the White Castle in Asia. In due time we will have occasion to notice the creation of the walls and towers of the stupendous fortification yet standing between Bebek and Hissar, a

monument to his energy and sagacity more imposing than anything left by him in Constantinople.

BOOK IV

THE PALACE OF BLACHERNE

CHAPTER I

THE PALACE OF BLACHERNE

The Prince of India was not given to idle expectations. He might deceive others, but he seldom deceived himself. His experience served him prophetically in matters largely dependent on motives ordinarily influential with men. He was confident the Emperor would communicate with him, and soon.

The third day after the adventure at the White Castle, a stranger, mounted, armed, and showily caparisoned, appeared at the Prince's door under guidance of Uel. In the study, to which he was hidden, he announced himself the bearer of a complimentary message from His Majesty, concluding with an invitation to the palace of Blacherne. If agreeable, His Majesty would be pleased to receive the Indian dignitary in the afternoon at three o'clock. An officer of the guard would be at the Grand Gate for his escort. The honor, needless to say, was accepted in becoming terms.

When the Prince descended to the hall of entry on the ground floor to take the sedan there, the unusual care given his attire was apparent. His beard was immaculately white. His turban of white silk, balloon in shape, and with a dazzle of precious stones in front, was a study. Over a shirt of finest linen, with ruffles of lace at the throat and breast, there was a plain gown of heavy black velvet, buttoned at the neck, but open down to a yellow sash around the waist. The sash was complemented by a belt which was a mass of pearls in relief on a ground of gold embroidery. The belt–plate and crescented sword scabbard were aflame with brilliants on blue enamelling. His trousers, ample as a skirt, were of white satin overflowing at the ankles. Pointed red slippers, sparkling with embroidery of small golden beads, completed the costume.

The procession in the street was most striking. First Nilo, as became a king of Kash–Cush, barbarously magnificent; the sedan next, on the

shoulders of four carriers in white livery; at the rear, two domestics arrayed *a la Cipango*, their strange blue garments fitting them so close as to impede their walking; yet as one of them bore his master's paper sunshade and ample cloak, and the other a cushion bloated into the proportions of a huge pillow, they were by no means wanting in self–importance. Syama, similarly attired, though in richer material, walked at the side of the sedan, ready to open the door or answer such signal as he might receive from within.

The appearance of this retinue in the streets was a show to the idle and curious, who came together as if rendered out of the earth, and in such numbers that before fairly reaching the thoroughfare by which the Grand Gate of Blacherne was usually approached from the city side, the gilded box on the shoulders of its bearers looked, off a little way, not unlike a boat rocking in waves.

Fortunately the people started in good humor, and meeting nothing to break the mood, they permitted the Prince to accomplish his journey without interruption. The companionship of the crowd was really agreeable to him; he hardly knew whether it were pleasanter to be able to excite such respectful curiosity than to gratify it successfully. It might have been otherwise had Lael been with him.

The Very High Residence, as the Palace of Blacherne was generally spoken of by Greeks, was well known to the Prince of India. The exclamation with which he settled himself in the sedan at setting out from his house—"Again, again, O Blacherne!"—disclosed a previous personal acquaintance with the royal property. And over and over again on the way he kept repeating, "O Blacherne! Beautiful Blacherne! Bloom the roses as of old in thy gardens? Do the rivulets in thy alabaster courts still run singing to the mosaic angels on the walls?"

As to the date of these recollections, if, as the poets tell us, time is like a flowing river, and memory a bridge for the conveniency of the soul returning to its experiences, how far had this man to travel the structure before reaching the Blacherne he formerly knew? Over what tremendous spaces between piers did it carry him!

The street traversed by the Prince carried him first to the Grate of St. Peter on the Golden Horn, and thence, almost parallel with the city wall, to Balat, a private landing belonging to the Emperor, at present known as the gate of Blacherne.

At the edge of an area marble paved, the people stopped, it being the limit of their privilege. Crossing the pavement, the visitor was set down in front of the Grand Gate of the Very High Residence. History, always abominating lapses, is yet more tender of some places than others. There, between flanking towers, an iron–plated valve strong enough to defy attack by any of the ancient methods was swung wide open, ready nevertheless to be rolled to at set of sun. The guard halted the Prince, and an officer took his name, and apologizing for a brief delay, disappeared with it. Alighting from his sedan, the worthy proceeded to take observation and muse while waiting.

The paved area on which he stood was really the bottom of a well–defined valley which ran off and up irregularly toward the southeast, leaving an ascent on its right memorable as the seventh hill of Constantinople. A stone wall marked here and there by sentinel boxes, each with a red pennon on its top, straggled down along the foot of the ascent to the Grand Gate. There between octangular towers loopholed and finished battlement style was a covered passage suggestive of Egypt. Two Victories in high relief blew trumpets at each other across the entrance front. Ponderous benches of porphyry, polished smooth by ages of usage, sat one on each side for the guards; fellows in helmets of shining brass, cuirasses of the same material inlaid with silver, greaves, and shoes stoutly buckled. Those of them sitting sprawled their bulky limbs broadly over the benches. The few standing seemed like selected giants, with blond beards and blue eyes, and axes at least three spans in length along their whetted edges. The Prince recognized the imperial guards—Danes, Saxons, Germans, and Swiss—their nationalities merged into the corps entitled *Varangians*.

Conscious, but unmindful of their stare, he kept his stand, and swept the hill from bottom to top, giving free rein to memory.

In 449 A. D.—he remembered the year and the circumstance well—an earthquake threw down the wall then enclosing the city. Theodosius restored it, leaving the whole height outside of this northwestern part a preserve wooded, rocky, but with one possession which had become so infinitely sanctified in Byzantine estimation as to impart the quality to all its appurtenances, that was the primitive but Very Holy Church of Blacherne, dedicated to the Virgin.

Near the church there was a pleasure house to which the Emperors, vainly struggling to escape the ceremonies the clergy had fastened upon them to the imbitterment of life, occasionally resorted, and down on the shore of the Golden Horn a zoological garden termed the Cynegion had been established. The latter afterwhile came to have a gallery in which the public was sometimes treated to games and combats between lions, tigers, and elephants. There also criminals and heretics were frequently carried and flung to the beasts.

Nor did the Prince fail to recall that in those cycles the sovereigns resided preferably in the Bucoleon, eastwardly by the sea of Marmora. He remembered some of them as acquaintances with whom he had been on close terms—Justinian, Heraclius, Irene, and the Porphyrogentes.

The iconoclastic masters of that cluster of magnificent tenements, the Bucoleon, had especial claims upon his recollection. Had he not incited them to many of their savageries? They were incidents, it is true, sadly out of harmony with his present dream; still their return now was with a certain fluttering of the spirit akin to satisfaction, for the victims in nearly every case had been Christians, and his business of life then was vengeance for the indignities and sufferings inflicted on his countrymen.

With a more decided flutter, he remembered a scheme he put into effect just twenty years after the restoration of the wall by Theodosius. In the character of a pious Christianized Israelite resident in Jerusalem, he pretended to have found the vestments of the Holy Mother of Christ. The discovery was of course miraculous, and he reported it circumstantially to the Patriarchs Galvius and Candidus. For the glory of God and the exaltation of the Faith, they brought the relics to Constantinople. There,

amidst most solemn pomp, the Emperor assisting, they were deposited in the Church of Saints Peter and Mark, to be transferred a little later to their final resting–place in the holier Church of the Virgin of Blacherne. There was a world of pious propriety in the idea that as the vestments belonged to the Mother of God they would better become her own house. The *Himation* or *Maphorion*, as the robe of the Virgin was called, brought the primitive edifice in the woods above the Cynegion a boundless increase of sanctity, while the discoverer received the freedom of the city, the reverence of the clergy, and the confidence of the Basileus.

Nor did the prodigious memory stay there. The hill facing the city was of three terraces. On the second one, half hidden among cypress and plane trees, he beheld a building, low, strong, and, from his direction, showing but one window. Some sixteen years previous, during his absence in Cipango, a fire had destroyed the Church of the Virgin, and owing to the poverty of the people and empire, the edifice had not been rebuilt. This lesser unpretentious structure was the Chapel of Blacherne which the flames had considerately spared. He recognized it instantly, and remembered it as full of inestimable relics—amongst them the *Himation*, considered indestructible; the Holy Cross which Heraclius, in the year 635, had brought from Jerusalem, and delivered to Sergius; and the *Panagia Blachernitissa*, or All Holy Banner of the Image of the Virgin. Then rose another reminiscence, and though to reach him it had to fly across a chasm of hundreds of years, it presented itself with the distinctness of an affair of yesterday. In 626, Heraclius being Emperor, a legion of Avars and Persians sacked Scutari, on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus, and laid siege to Constantinople. The Byzantines were in awful panic; and they would have yielded themselves had not Sergius the Patriarch been in control. With a presence of mind equal to the occasion, he brought the *Panagia* forth, and supported by an army of clerics and monks, traversed the walls, waving the All Holy Banner. A volley of arrows from invisible archers fell upon the audacious infidels, and the havoc was dreadful; they fled, and their prince, the Khagan, fled with them, declaring he had seen a woman in shining garments but of awful presence on the walls. The woman was the Holy Mother; and with a conceit easily mistaken for gratitude, the

Byzantines declared their capital thenceforward guarded by God. When they went out to the Church in the Woods and found it unharmed by the enemy, they were persuaded the Mother had adopted them; in return, what could they else than adopt her? Pisides, the poet, composed a hymn, to glorify her. The Church consecrated the day of the miraculous deliverance a fete day observable by Greeks forever. The Emperor removed the old building, and on its site raised another of a beauty more expressive of devotion. To secure it from ravage and profanation, he threw a strong wall around the whole venerated hill, and by demolishing the ancient work of Theodosius, made Blacherne a part of the city.

By and by the Church required enlargement, and it was then cruci–formed by the addition of transepts right and left. Still later, a Chapel was erected specially for the relics and the All Holy Banner. This was contiguous to the Church, and besides being fireproof, it covered a spring of pure water, afterwards essential in many splendid ceremonies civil as well as religious. The Chamber of Relics was prohibited to all but the Basileus. He alone could enter it. By great favor, the Prince of India was once permitted to look into the room, and he remembered it large and dimly lighted, its shadows alive, however, with the glitter of silver and gold in every conceivable form, offered there as the Wise Men laid their gifts before the Child in the Cave of the Nativity.

Again and again the Church was burned, yet the Chapel escaped. It seemed an object of divine protection. The sea might deliver tempests against the Seven Hills, earthquakes shake the walls down and crack the hanging dome of St. Sophia, cinders whiten paths from the porphyry column over by the Hippodrome to the upper terrace of Blacherne; yet the Chapel escaped—yet the holy fountain in its crypt flowed on purer growing as the centuries passed.

The Prince, whose memories we are but weaving into words, did not wonder at the increase of veneration attaching to the Chapel and its precious deposits—manuscripts, books, bones, flags, things personal to the Apostles, the Saints, the Son and His Mother, parings of their nails, locks of their hair, spikes and splinters of the Cross itself—he did not wonder at

it, or smile, for he knew there is a devotional side to every man which wickedness may blur but cannot obliterate. He himself was going about the world convinced that the temple of Solomon was the House of God.

The guards sprawling on the benches kept staring at him; one of them let his axe fall without so much as attracting the Prince's attention. His memory, with a hold on him too firm to be disturbed by such trifles, insisted on its resurrectionary work, and returned him to the year 865. Constantinople was again besieged, this time by a horde from the Russian wilderness under the chiefs Dir and Askold. They had passed the upper sea in hundreds of boats, and disembarking on the European shore, marched down the Bosphorus, leaving all behind them desolate. Photius was then Patriarch. When the fleet was descried from the walls, he prevailed on the Emperor to ask the intervention of the Virgin. The *Maphorion* or Sacred Eobe was brought out, and in presence of the people on their knees, the clergy singing the hymn of Pisides, the holy man plunged it into the waves.

A wind arose under which the water in its rocky trough was as water in a shaken bowl. The ships of the invaders sunk each other. Not one survived. Of the men, those who lived came up out of the vortexes praying to be taken to the Church of Blacherne for baptism. This was two hundred years and more after the first deliverance of the city, and yet the Mother was faithful to her chosen!—Constantinople was still the guarded of God!—The *Penagia* was still the All Holy! Having repulsed the Muscovite invasion, what excuse for his blasphemy would there be left the next to challenge its terrors?

The Prince of India saw the blackened walls of the burned Church, an appealing spectacle which the surrounding trees tried to cover with their foliage, but could not; then he lifted his eyes to the Palace upon the third terrace.

To the hour decay sets in the touches of Time are usually those of an artist who loves his subject, and wishes merely to soften or ennoble its expression. So had he dealt with the Very High Residence.

It began in the low ground down by the Cynegion, and arose with the city wall, which was in fact its southwestern front. Though always spoken of in the singular, like the Bucoleon, it was a collection of palaces, vast, irregular, and declarative of the taste of the different eras they severally memorialized. The spaces between them formed courts and *places* under cover; yet as the architects had adhered to the idea of a main front toward the northeast, there appeared a certain unity of design in the structures.

This main front, now under the Prince's view, was frequently broken, advancing here, retreating there; one section severely plain and sombre; another relieved by porticos with figured friezes resting on tall columns. The irregularities were pleasing; some of them were stately; and they were all helped not a little by domes and pavilions without which the roof lines would have been monotonous.

Lifting his gaze up the ascent from the low ground, it rested presently on a Tower built boldly upon the Heraclian wall. This was the highest pinnacle of the Palace, first to attract the observer, longest to hold his attention. No courier was required to tell its history to him through whose eyes we are now looking—it was the tower of Isaac Angelus. How clearly its outlines cut the cloudless sky! How strong it seemed up there, as if built by giants! Yet with windows behind balconies, how airy and graceful withal! The other hills of the city, and the populated valleys between the hills, spread out below it, like an unrolled map. The warders of the Bucoleon, or what is now Point Serail, the home–returning mariner shipping oars off Scutari, the captain of the helmeted column entering the Golden Gate down by the Seven Towers, the insolent Genoese on the wharves of Galata, had only to look up, and lo! the perch of Isaac. And when, as often must have happened, the privileged lord himself sat midafternoons on the uppermost balcony of the Tower, how the prospect soothed the fever of his spirit! If he were weary of the city, there was the Marmora, always ready to reiterate the hues of the sky, and in it the Isles of the Princes, their verdurous shades permeated with dreamful welcome to the pleasure–seeker as well as the monk; or if he longed for a further flight, old Asia made haste with enticing invitation to some of the villas strewing its littoral behind the Isles; and yonder, to the eye fainting in the

distance, scarce more than a pale blue boundary cloud, the mountain beloved by the gods, whither they were wont to assemble at such times as they wished to learn how it fared with Ilium and the sons of Priam, or to enliven their immortality with loud symposia. A prospect so composed would seem sufficient, if once seen, to make a blind man's darkness perpetually luminous.

Sometimes, however, the superlative magnate preferred the balcony on the western side of the Tower. There he could sit in the shade, cooled by waftures from a wide campania southward, or, peering over the balustrade, watch the peasantry flitting through the breaks of the Kosmidion, now the purlieus of Eyoub.

Again the Prince was carried back through centuries. It had been determined to build at Blacherne; but the hill was steep. How could spaces be gained for foundations, for courts and gardens? The architects pondered the problem. At last one of bolder genius came forward. We will accept the city wall for a western front, he said, and build from it; and for levels, allow us to commence at the foot of the height, and rear arches upon arches. The proposal was accepted; and thereafter for years the quarter was cumbered with brick and skeleton frames, and workingmen were numerous and incessantly busy as colonized ants. Thus the ancient pleasure house disappeared, and the first formal High Residence took its place; at the same time the Bucoleon, for so many ages the glory of Constantinople, was abandoned by its masters.

Who was the first permanent occupant of the Palace of Blacherne? The memory, theretofore so prompt, had now no reply. No matter—the Prince recalled sessions had with Angelus on the upper balcony yonder. He remembered them on account of his host one day saying: "Here I am safe." The next heard of him he was a captive and blind.

Passing on rapidly, he remembered the appearance of Peter the Hermit in the gorgeous reception room of the Palace in 1096. Quite as distinctly, he also remembered the audience Alexis I. tendered Godfrey of Bouillon and his Barons in the same High Residence.

What a contrast the host and his guests presented that day! The latter were steel clad from head to foot and armed for battle, while Alexis was a spectacle of splendor unheard of in the barbarous West. How the preachers and eunuchs in the silk–gowned train of the one trembled as the redoubtables of the West mangled the velvet carpets with their cruel spurs! How peculiarly the same redoubtables studied the pearls on the yellow stole of the wily Comnene and the big jewels in his Basilean mitre—as if they were counting and weighing them mentally, preliminary to casting up at leisure a total of value! And the table ware—this plate and yon bowl—were they really gold or some cunning deception? The Greeks were so treacherous! And when the guests were gone, the Greeks, on their part, were not in the least surprised at the list of spoons and cups subtly disappeared—gifts, they supposed, intended by the noble "Crosses" for the most Holy Altar in Jerusalem!

Still other remembrances of the Prince revived at sight of the Palace—many others—amongst them, how the Varangians beat the boastful Montferrat and the burly Count of Flanders in the assault of 1203, specially famous for the gallantry of old Dandolo, operating with his galleys on the side of the Golden Horn. Brave fellows, those Varangians! Was the corps well composed now as then? He glanced at the lusty examples before him on the stone benches, thinking they might shortly have to answer the question.

These reminiscences, it must not be forgotten, were of brief passage with the Prince, much briefer than the time taken in writing them. They were interrupted by the appearance of a military official whose uniform and easy manner bespoke palace life. He begged to be informed if he had the honor of addressing the Prince of India; and being affirmatively assured, he announced himself sent to conduct him to His Majesty. The hill was steep, and the way somewhat circuitous; did the Prince need assistance? The detention, he added, was owing to delay in getting intelligence of the Prince's arrival to His Majesty, who had been closely engaged, arranging for certain ceremonies which were to occur in the evening. Perhaps His Majesty had appointed the audience imagining the ceremonies might

prove entertaining to the Prince. These civilities, and others, were properly responded to, and presently the cortege was in motion.

The lower terrace was a garden of singular perfection.

On the second terrace, the party came to the ruined Church where, during a halt, the officer told of the fire. His Majesty had registered a vow, he said, at the end of the story, to rebuild the edifice in a style superior to any former restoration.

The Prince, while listening, observed the place. Excepting the Church, it was as of old. There the grove of cypresses, very ancient, and tall and dark. There, too, the Chapel of purplish stone, and at one side of it the sentry box and bench, and what seemed the identical detail of Varangians on duty. There the enclosed space between the edifices, and the road across the pavement to the next terrace only a little deeper worn. There the arched gateway of massive masonry through which the road conducted, the carving about it handsome as ever; and there, finally, from the base of the Chapel, the brook, undiminished in volume and song, ran off out of sight into the grove, an old acquaintance of the Prince's.

Moving on through the arched way, the guide led up to the third and last terrace. Near the top there was a cut, and on its right embankment a party of workmen spreading and securing a canopy of red cloth.

"Observe, O Prince," the officer said. "From this position, if I mistake not, you will witness the ceremony I mentioned as in preparation."

The guest had time to express his gratification, when the Palace of Blacherne, the Very High Residence, burst upon him in long extended view, a marvel of imperial prodigality and Byzantine genius.

CHAPTER II

THE AUDIENCE

The sedan was set down before a marble gate on the third terrace.

"My duty is hardly complete. Suffer me to conduct you farther," the officer said, politely, as the Prince stepped from the box.

"And my servants?"

"They will await you."

The speakers were near the left corner of a building which projected considerably from the general front line of the Palace. The wall, the gateway, and the building were of white marble smoothly dressed.

After a few words with Syama, the Prince followed his guide into a narrow enclosure on the right of which there was a flight of steps, and on the left a guard house. Ascending the steps, the two traversed a passage until they came to a door.

"The waiting–room. Enter," said the conductor.

Four heavily curtained windows lighted the apartment. In the centre there were a massive table, and, slightly removed from it, a burnished copper brazier. Bright–hued rugs covered the floor, and here and there stools carven and upholstered were drawn against the painted walls. The officer, having seen his charge comfortably seated, excused himself and disappeared.

Hardly was he gone when two servants handsomely attired came in with refreshments—fruits in natural state, fruits candied, sweetened bread, sherbet, wine and water. A chief followed them, and, with much humility of manner, led the Prince to a seat at the table, and invited him to help himself. The guest was then left alone; and while he ate and drank he wondered at the stillness prevalent; the very house seemed in awe.

Ere long another official entered, and after apologizing for introducing himself, said: "I am Dean of the Court. In the absence of my lord Phranza, it has fallen to me to discharge, well as I can, the duties of Grand Chamberlain."

The Prince, observant of the scrutinizing glance the Dean gave his person, acknowledged the honor done him, and the pleasure he derived from the acquaintance. The Dean ought to be happy; he had great fame in the city and abroad as a most courteous, intelligent, and faithful servant; there was no doubt he deserved preeminently the confidence his royal master reposed in him.

"I am come, O Prince," the old functionary said, after thanks for the friendly words, "to ascertain if you are refreshed, and ready for the audience."

"I am ready."

"Let us to His Majesty then. If I precede you, I pray pardon."

Drawing the portiere aside, the Dean held it for the other's passage.

They entered an extensive inner court, surrounded on three sides by a gallery resting on pillars. On the fourth side, a magnificent staircase ascended to a main landing, whence, parting right and left, it terminated in the gallery. Floor, stairs, balustrading, pillars, everything here was red marble flooded with light from a circular aperture in the roof open to the sky.

Along the stairs, at intervals, officers armed and in armor were stationed, and keeping their positions faced inwardly, they seemed like statues. Other armed men were in the galleries. The silence was impressive. Coming presently to an arched door, the Prince glanced into a deep chamber, and at the further end of it beheld the Emperor seated in a chair of state on a dais curtained and canopied with purple velvet.

"Take heed now, O Prince," said the Dean, in a low voice. "Yonder is His Majesty. Do thou imitate me in all things. Come."

With this kindly caution the Dean led into the chamber of public audience. Just within the door, he halter, crossed hands upon his breast,

and dropped to his knees, his eyes downcast; rising, he kept on about halfway to the dais, and again knelt; when near his person's length from the dais, he knelt and fully prostrated himself. The Prince punctiliously executed every motion, except that at the instant of halting the last time he threw both hands up after the manner of Orientals. A velvet carpet of the accepted imperial color stretched from door to dais greatly facilitated the observances.

A statuesque soldier, with lance and shield, stood at the left of the dais, a guard against treachery; by the chair, bare–headed, bare–legged, otherwise a figure in a yellow tunic lightly breastplated, appeared the sword–bearer, his slippers stayed with bands of gold, a blade clasped to his body by the left forearm, the hilt above his shoulder; and spacious as the chamber was, a row of dignitaries civil, military, and ecclesiastical lined the walls each in prescribed regalia. The hush already noticed was observable here, indicative of rigid decorum and awful reverence. "Rise, Prince of India," the Emperor said, without movement.

The visitor obeyed.

The last of the Palaeologae was in Basilean costume; a golden circlet on his head brilliantly jewelled and holding a purple velvet cap in place; an overgown of the material of the cap but darker in tint, and belted at the waist; a mantle stiff with embroidery of pearls hanging by narrow bands so as to drop from the shoulder over the breast and back, leaving the neck bare; an ample lap–robe of dark purple cloth sparkling with precious stones covering his nether limbs. The chair was square in form without back or arms; its front posts twined and intricately inlaid with ivory and silver, and topped each with a golden cone for hand–rest. The bareness of the neck was relieved by four strings of pearls dropped from the circlet two on a side, and drawn from behind the ears forward so as to lightly tip the upper edge of the mantle. The right hand rested at the moment on the right cone of the chair; the left was free. The attitude of the figure thus presented was easy and unconstrained, the countenance high and noble, and altogether the guest admitted to himself that he had seldom been introduced to royalty more really imposing.

There was hardly an instant allowed for these observations. To set his guest at ease, Constantine continued: "The way to our door is devious and upward. I hope it has not too severely tried you."

"Your Majesty, were the road many times more trying I would willingly brave it to be the recipient of honors and attentions which have made the Emperor of Constantinople famous in many far countries, and not least in mine."

The courtierly turn of the reply did not escape the Emperor. It had been strange if he had not put the character of his guest to question; indeed, an investigation had proceeded by his order, with the invitation to audience as a result; and now the self–possession of the stranger, together with his answer, swept the last doubt from, the imperial mind. An attendant, responding to a sign, came forward.

"Bring me wine," and as the servant disappeared with the order, Constantine again addressed his visitor. "You maybe a Brahman or an Islamite," he said, with a pleasant look to cover any possible mistake: "in either case, O Prince, I take it for granted that the offer of a draught of Chian will not be resented."

"I am neither a Mohammedan, nor a devotee of the gentle son of Maya. I am not even a Hindoo in religion. My faith leads me to be thankful for all God's gifts to his creatures. I will take the cup Your Majesty deigns to propose."

The words were spoken with childlike simplicity of manner; yet nowhere in these pages have we had a finer example of the subtlety which, characteristic of the speaker, seemed inspiration rather than study. He knew from general report how religion dominated his host, and on the spur of the moment, thought to pique curiosity with respect to his own faith; seeing, as he fancied, a clear path to another audience, with ampler opportunity to submit and discuss the idea of Universal Brotherhood in God.

The glance with which he accompanied assent to the cup was taken as a mere accentuation of gratitude; it was, however, for discovery. Had the Emperor noticed the declaration of what he was not? Did his intelligence

suggest how unusual it was for an Indian to be neither a Mohammedan, nor a Brahman, nor even a Buddhist in religion? He saw a sudden lifting of the brows, generally the preliminary of a question; he even made an answer ready; but the other's impulse seemed to spend itself in an inquiring look, which, lingering slightly, might mean much or nothing. The Prince resolved to wait.

Constantine, as will be seen presently, did observe the negations, and was moved to make them the subject of remark at the moment; but inordinately sensitive respecting his own religious convictions, he imagined others like himself in that respect, and upon the scruple, for which the reader will not fail to duly credit him, deferred inquiry until the visitor was somewhat better understood.

Just then the cupbearer appeared with the wine; a girlish lad he was, with long blond curls. Kneeling before the dais, he rested a silver platter and the liquor sparkling on it in a crystal decanter upon his right knee, waiting the imperial pleasure.

Taking the sign given him, the Dean stepped forward and filled the two cups of chased gold also on the platter, and delivered them. Then the Emperor held his cup up while he said in a voice sufficiently raised for general hearing:

"Prince of India, I desired your presence to–day the rather to discharge myself of obligations for important assistance rendered my kinswoman, the Princess Irene of Therapia, during her detention at the White Castle; a circumstance of such late occurrence it must be still fresh in your memory. By her account the Governor was most courteous and hospitable, and exerted himself to make her stay in his stronghold agreeable as possible. Something truly extraordinary, considering the forbidding exterior of the house, and the limited means of entertainment it must have to offer, she declared he succeeded in converting what threatened to be a serious situation into an adventure replete with pleasant surprises. A delegate is now at the Castle assuring the Governor of my appreciation of his friendly conduct. By her account, also, I am bounden to you, Prince, scarcely less than to him."

The gravity of the visitor at hearing this was severely attacked. Great as was his self–control, he smiled at thought of the dilemma the Governor was in, listening to a speech of royal thanks and receiving rich presents in lieu of his young master Mahommed. When the envoy returned and reported, if perchance he should describe the Turk whom he found in actual keeping of the Castle, the discrepancy between his picture of the man and that of the Princess would be both mysterious and remarkable.

"Your Majesty," the Prince returned, with a deprecating gesture, "the storm menaced me quite as much as the Princess, and calls for confession of my inability to see wherein I rendered her service free of regard for myself. Indeed, it is my duty to inform Your Majesty, all these noble witnesses hearing me, that I am more beholden to your noble kinswoman for help and deliverance in the affair than she can be to me. But for the courage and address, not to mention the dignity and force with which she availed herself of her royal relationship, resolving what was at first a simple invitation to refuge into a high treaty between the heads of two great powers, I and my daughter"—

"Daughter, said you?"

"Yes, Your Majesty—Heaven has so favored me—I, my daughter, and my frightened boatmen would have been committed to the river near the Castle, without recourse except in prayer to Heaven. Nay, Your Majesty, have I permission to say on, Charity had never a sweeter flowering than when the Princess remembered to take the stranger under her protection. I am past the age of enthusiasm and extravagance—my beard and dimming eyes prove the admission—yet I declare, weighing each word, she has the wit, the spirit, the goodness, the loveliness to be the noblest of queens to the best of kings; and fails she such choice, it will be because destiny has been struck by some unaccountable forgetfulness."

By this time the courtiers, drawn in from the walls, composed a very brilliant circle around the throne, each one curious to hear the stranger as he had been to see him; and they were quick to point his last sentence; for most of them had been with the Emperor in the voyage to Therapia, which was still a theme of wager and wrangle scarcely less interesting than in its

first hour. By one impulse they ventured a glance at the royal face, seeking a revelation; but the countenance was steady as a mask.

"The encomium is well bestowed, and approves thy experience, Prince, as a reader of women," Constantine said, with just enough fervor. "Henceforth I shall know the degree of trust to repose in thy judgment, other problems as difficult being in controversy. Nevertheless, is the lady to be believed, then, O Prince, I repeat my acknowledgment of indebtedness. It pleases me to greatly estimate thy influence and good judgment happily exerted. Mayst thou live long, Prince of India, and always find thyself as now among friends who charge themselves to be watchful for opportunities to befriend thee."

He raised the cup.

"It is Your Majesty's pleasure," the guest replied, and they drank together.

"A seat for the Prince of India," the Emperor next directed.

The chair, when brought, was declined.

"In my palace—for at home I exercise the functions of a king—it often falls to me to give audiences; if public, we call them *durbars;* and then an inferior may not sit in my presence. The rule, like all governing the session, is of my own enactment. I see plainly how greatly Your Majesty designs to heap me with honors; and if I dare decline this one, it is not from disposition to do a teacher's part, but from habit which has the sanction of heredity, and the argument self addressed: Shall I despise my own ordinances? God forbid!"

A murmur from the concourse was distinctly audible, which the Dean interpreted by repeated affirmative nods. In other words, by this stroke the able visitor won the court as he had already won its head; insomuch that the most doubting of the doubters would not have refused to certify him on belief the very Prince of India he claimed to be. The Emperor, on his part, could not but defer to scruples so cogently and solemnly put; at the same time, out of his very certainty respecting the guest, he passed to a question which in probability the reader has been for some time entertaining.

"The makers of a law should be first to observe it; for having done so, they then have God's license to exert themselves in its enforcement; and when one is found observant of a principle which has root so perceptibly in conscience, to deny him his pleasure were inexcusable. Have thy will, Prince."

The applause which greeted the decision of His Majesty was hardly out of ear when he proceeded:

"Again I pray you, Sir Guest—I greatly misapprehend the travellers who tell of India, if the people of that venerable country are not given to ceremonials religious as well as secular. Many of our own observances of a sacred nature are traceable to study and discernment of the good effects of form in worship, and since some of them are unquestionably borrowed from temples of the Pagan gods, yet others may be of Hindoo origin. Who shall say? Wherefore, speaking generally, I should fear to ask you to any of our Church mysteries which I did not know were purely Greek. One such we have this evening. We call it *Pannychides*. Its principal feature is a procession of monastic brethren from the holy houses of the city and Islands—all within the jurisdiction of our Eastern Church, which, please God, is of broader lines than our State. The fathers have been assembling for the celebration several days. They will form in the city at set of sun, throwing the march into the night. Here, within our grounds, more particularly at the door of the Chapel of our Holy Virgin of Blacherne, I will meet them. They will pass the night in prayer, an army on bended knees, sorrowing for the pains of our Saviour in Gethsemane. I was uncertain what faith you profess; yet, Prince, I thought—forgive me, if it was an error—a sight of the spirit of our Churchmen as it will be manifested on this occasion might prove interesting to you; so I have taken the liberty of ordering a stand erected for your accommodation at a position favorable to witnessing the procession in movement up the terraces. No one has seen the spectacle without realizing as never before the firmness of the hold Christ has taken upon the souls of men." The last words startled the Prince. Christ's hold upon the souls of men! The very thing he wanted to learn, and, if possible, measure. A cloud of thoughts fell about him; yet he kept clear head, and answered quietly:

"Your Majesty has done me great kindness. I am already interested in the Mystery. Since we cannot hope ever to behold God with these mortal eyes, the nearest amend for the deprivation is the privilege of seeing men in multitudes demonstrating their love of Him."

Constantine's eyes lingered on the Prince's face. The utterances attracted him. The manner was so artfully reverential as not to leave a suspicion of the guile behind it. Going down great galleries, every one has had his attention suddenly arrested; he pauses, looks, and looks again, then wakes to find the attraction was not a picture, but only a flash within his own mind. So, with the guest before him, the Emperor was thinking of the man rather than seeing him—thinking of him with curiosity fully awakened, and a desire to know him better. And had he followed up the desire, he would have found its source in the idea that India was a region in which reflection and psychological experiment had been exhausted—where if one appeared with a thought it turned old ere it could be explained—where wisdom had fructified until there was no knowledge more—where the teaching capacity was all there was remaining. That is to say, in the day of the last Byzantine Emperor, centuries ago, humanity in India was, as now, a clock stopped, but stopped in the act of striking, leaving a glory in the air imaginable like the continuing sound of hushed cathedral bells.

"Prince," he at length said, "you will remain here until the procession is announced at the Grand Gate. I will then give you a guide and a guard. Our steward has orders to look after your comfort." Turning then to the acting Chamberlain, he added: "Good Dean, have we not a little time in which to hear our guest further?"

"Your Majesty, an hour at least."

"You hear, O Prince? Provided always that it be not to your displeasure, tell me what I am to understand by the disclaimer which, broadly interpreted, leaves you either a Jew or a Christian?"

CHAPTER III

THE NEW FAITH PROCLAIMED

The question came earlier than the Prince expected, and in different form. Those in position to observe his face saw it turn a trifle pale, and he hesitated, and glanced around uneasily, as though not altogether assured of his footing. This might have been by–play; if so, it was successful; every countenance not sympathetic was serious.

"Your Majesty's inquiry must be for information. I am too humble for an unfriendly design on the part of one so exalted as the Emperor of Constantinople. It might be otherwise if I represented a church, a denomination, or a recognized religion; as it is, my faith is my own."

"But bethink thee, Prince, thou mayst have the truth—the very God's truth," Constantine interposed, with kindly intent. "We all know thy country hath been the cradle of divine ideas. So, speak, and fear not."

The glance the Emperor received was winsomely grateful.

"Indeed, Your Majesty, indeed I have need of good countenance. The question put me has lured more men to bloody graves than fire, sword and wave together. And then why I believe as I believe demands time in excess of what we have; and I am the bolder in this because in limiting me Your Majesty limits yourself. So I will now no more than define my Faith. But first, it does not follow from my disclaimer that I can only be a Jew or a Christian; for as air is a vehicle for a multitude of subtleties in light, faith in like manner accommodates a multitude of opinions."

While speaking, the Prince's voice gradually gained strength; his color returned, and his eyes enlarged and shone with strange light. Now his right hand arose, the fingers all closed except the first one, and it was long and thin, and he waved it overhead, like a conjuring wand. If the concourse had been unwilling to hear him, they could not have turned away.

"I am not a Hindoo, my Lord; because I cannot believe men can make their own gods."

The Father Confessor to the Emperor, at the left of the dais in a stole of gold and crimson cloth, smiled broadly.

"I am not a Buddhist," the Prince continued; "because I cannot believe the soul goes to nothingness after death."

The Father Confessor clapped his hands.

"I am not a Confucian; because I cannot reduce religion to philosophy or elevate philosophy into religion."

The blood of the audience began to warm.

"I am not a Jew; because I believe God loves all peoples alike, or if he makes distinctions, it is for righteousness' sake."

Here the chamber rang with clapping.

"I am not an Islamite; because when I raise my eyes to Heaven, I cannot tolerate sight of a man standing between me and God—no, my Lord, not though he be a Prophet."

The hit was palpable, and from hate of the old enemy, the whole assemblage broke into an uproar of acclamation. Only the Emperor kept his gravity. Leaning heavily on the golden cone at the right of his chair, his chin depressed, his eyes staring, scarcely breathing, he waited, knowing, that having gone so far, there was before the speaker an unavoidable climax; and seeing it in his face, and coming, he presently aroused, and motioned for silence.

"I am not"—

The Prince stopped, but when the hush was deepest went on—"I am not a Christian; because—because I believe—God is God."

The Father Confessor's hands were ready to clap, but they stayed so; the same spell took hold of the bystanders, except that they looked at the Emperor, and he alone seemed to comprehend the concluding phrase. He settled back easily in his seat, saying, "Thy Faith then is—"

"God!"

The monosyllable was the Prince's.

And with clear sight of the many things reprobated—Images, Saints, the Canonized, even the worship of Christ and the Holy Mother—with clear sight also of the wisdom which in that presence bade the guest stop with the mighty name—at the same time more curious than ever to hear in full discourse the man who could reduce religion to a single word and leave it comprehensible, Constantine drew a breath of relief, and said, smiling, "Of a surety, O Prince, there was never a Faith which, with such appearance of simplicity in definition, is capable of such infinity of meaning. I am full of questions; and these listening, my lords of the court, are doubtless in a similar mood. What sayest thou, O my most orthodox Confessor?" The Father bowed until the hem of his blazing stole overlaid the floor.

"Your Majesty, we too are believers in God; but we also believe in much beside; so, if but for comparison of creeds, which is never unprofitable while in good nature, I should like to hear the noble and fair speaking guest further."

"And you, my Lords?"

The throng around answered, "Yes, yes!"

"We will have it so then. Look, good Logothete, for the nearest day unoccupied."

A handsome man of middle age approached the dais, and opening a broad–backed book, evidently the record of the royal appointments, turned a number of leaves, and replied: "Your Majesty, two weeks from tomorrow."

"Note the same set aside for the Prince of India.–Dost hear, Prince?"

The latter lowered his face the better to conceal his pleasure.

"All days are alike to me," he answered.

"In this our palace, then—two weeks from to–morrow at the hour of noon. And now"—the rustle and general movement of the courtiers was instantly stayed—"and now, Prince, didst thou not speak of exercising the functions of a king at home? Thy capital must be in India, but where, pray? And how callest thou thyself? And why is this city so fortunate as to

have attracted thy wandering feet? It is not every king so his own master as to turn traveller, and go about making study of the world; although, I admit, it would be better could every king do so."

These questions were rapidly put, but as the Prince was prepared for them, he responded pleasantly:

"In answering the questions Your Majesty now honors me with. I am aware how serious the mistake would be did I think of your curiosity alone. A most excellent quality in a great man is patience. Alas, that it should be one of the most abused!… Among the oldest of Hindoo titles is *Rajah*. It means King rather than Prince, and I was born to it. Your Majesty may have heard of Oodeypoor, the bosom jewel of Rajpootana, the white rose just bloomed of Indian cities. At the foot of a spur of the Arawalli mountains, a river rises, and on its right bank reposes the city; from which, southeast a little way, a lake lies outspread, like a mirror fallen face upward. And around the lake are hills, tall and broken as these of the Bosphorus; and seen from the water the hills are masses of ivy and emerald woods thickly sprinkled with old fortresses and temples, and seven–roofed red pagodas, each the home of a great gold–decked Buddha, with lesser Buddhas in family. And in the lake are islands all palaces springing from the water line in open arches, and sculptured walls, and towered gates; and of still days their wondrous cunning in the air is renewed afresh in the waveless depths below them. If they are glorious then, what are they when reconstructed for festal nights in shining lamps? For be it said, my Lord, if a stranger in the walls of this centre of empire may speak a word which has the faintest savor of criticism, the Indian genius analyzed beauty before there was a West, and taking suggestions from spark and dewdrop, applied them to architecture. Smile not, I pray, for you may see the one in the lamp multiplied for outline traceries, and the other in the fountain, the cascade, and the limpid margin at the base of walls. Or if still you think me exaggerating, is not the offence one to be lightly forgiven where the offender is telling of his birthplace? In one of the palaces of that Lake of Palaces I was born, the oldest son of the Rajah of Meywar, Oodeypoor his capital. In these words, which I hope may be kindly judged, Your Majesty will find answers to one, if not two of the

questions you were pleased to ask me—Why I am here? And why making study of the world? Will Your Majesty pardon my boldness, if I suggest that a reply to those inquiries would be better at the audience set for me next? I fear it is too long for telling now."

"Be it so," said Constantine, "yet a hint of it may not be amiss. It may set us to thinking; and, Prince, a mind prepared for an idea is like ground broken and harrowed for seed."

The Prince hesitated.

"Your Majesty—my Lord"—he then said firmly, "the most sorrowful of men are those with conceptions too great for them, and which they must carry about with nothing better to sustain their sinking spirits than a poor hope of having them one day adopted; for until that day they are like a porter overladen and going from house to house unknowing the name of the owner of his burden or where to look for him. I am such an unfortunate… Oodeypoor, you must understand, is more than comely to the eye of a native; it is a city where all religions are tolerated. The Taing, the Brahman, the Hindoo, the Mohammedan, the Buddhist live together there, protected and in peace, with their worship and houses of worship; nor is there any shutting of mouths, because controversy long since attained finality amongst them; or perhaps it were better saying, because opinions there have now their recognized grooves, and run in them from generation to generation—opinions to which men are born as to their property, only without right of change or modification; neither can they break away from them. There is no excuse if an intelligent man in such a situation does not comprehend all the religions thus in daily practice; or if one does comprehend them he should not flatter himself possessed of any superior intellect… The Rajah, my father, died, and I mounted his silver throne, and for ten years administered justice in the Hall of Durbars to which he had been used, he and his father's father, Children of the Sun, most pure of blood. By that time I was of mature mind, and having given myself up to study, came to believe there is but one doctrine—principle—call it what you will, my Lord—but one of heavenly origin—one primarily comprehensible by all—too simple indeed to satisfy the egotism of men;

wherefore, without rejecting, they converted it into a foundation, and built upon it each according to his vanity, until, in course of ages, the foundation was overlaid with systems of belief, childish, unnatural, ridiculous, indecent, or else too complicated for common understanding"—

"This principle—what is it, Prince?" Constantine asked nervously.

"Your Majesty, I have already once named it."

"Mean you God?"

"And now, my Lord, thou hast pronounced it."

The stillness in the chamber was very deep. Every man seemed to be asking, what next?

"One day, Your Majesty—it was in my tenth year of government—a function was held in a tent erected for the purpose—a *shamiana* vastly larger than any hall. I went up to it in state, passing through lines of elephants, an hundred on either hand, covered with cloth of gold and with houdahs of yellow silk roofed with the glory of peacocks. Behind the mighty brutes soldiery blotted out the landscape, and the air between them and the sky was a tawny cloud of flaunting yak–tails; nor had one use for ears, so was he deafened by beat of drums and blowing of brazen horns twice a tall man's height. I sat on a throne of silver and gold, all my ministers present. My brother entered, he the next entitled. Halfway down the aisle of chiefs I met him, and then led him to my seat, and saluted him Rajah of Meywar. Your Majesty, so I parted with crown and title—laid them down voluntarily to search the world for men in power in love with God enough to accept him as their sum of faith. Behold why I travel making the earth a study! Behold why I am in Constantinople!"

Constantine was impressed.

"Where hast thou been?" he at length asked—"where before coming here?"

"It were easier did Your Majesty ask where I have not been. For then I could answer, Everywhere, except Rome."

"Dost thou impugn our devotion to God?"

"Not so, not so, my Lord! I am seeking to know the degree of your love of Him."

"How, Prince?"

"By a test."

"What test?"

No man listening could have said what mood the Emperor was in; yet the guest replied with an appearance of rising courage: "A trial, to find all the other things entering into Faith which Your Majesty and Your Majesty's lords and subjects are willing to lay down for God's sake."

With a peremptory gesture Constantine silenced the stir and rustle in the chamber. "It is right boldly put," he said.

"But none the less respectfully. My Lord, I am striving to he understood."

"You speak of a trial. To what end?"

"One Article of Faith, the all–essential of Universal Brotherhood in Religion."

"A magnificent conception! But is it practicable?"

Fortunately or unfortunately for the Prince, an officer that moment made way through the courtiers, and whispered to the Dean, who at once addressed himself to the Emperor.

"I pray pardon, but it pleased Your Majesty to bid me notify you when it is time to make ready for the Mystery to–night. The hour is come; besides which a messenger from Scholarius waits for an interview."

Constantine arose.

"Thanks, worthy Dean," he said; "we will not detain the messenger. The audience is dismissed."

Then descending from the dais, he gave his hand to the Prince. "I see the idea you have in mind, and it is worthy the bravest effort. I shall look forward to the next audience with concern. Forget not that the guestship continues. My steward will take you in charge. Farewell."

The Prince, sinking to his knees, kissed the offered hand, whereupon the Emperor said as if just reminded: "Was not your daughter with my kinswoman in the White Castle?"

"Your Majesty, the Princess on that occasion most graciously consented to accept my daughter as her attendant."

"Were she to continue in the same attendance, Prince, we might hope to have her at court some day."

"I lay many thanks at Your Majesty's feet. She is most honored by the suggestion." Constantine in lead of his officers then passed out, while, in care of the steward, the Prince was conducted to the reception room, and served with refreshments. Afterwhile through the windows he beheld the day expiring, and the first audience finished, and the second appointed, he was free to think of the approaching Mystery.

Be it said now he was easy in feeling—satisfied with the management of his cause—satisfied with the impression he had made on the Emperor and the court as well. Had not the latter applauded and voted to hear him again? When taken with the care habitually observed by leading personages in audiences formal as that just passed, how broadly sympathetic the expressions of the monarch had been.

In great cheerfulness the Prince ate and drank, and even occupied the wine–colored leisure conning an argument for the occasion in prospect—noon, next day two weeks! And more clearly than ever his scheme seemed good. Could he carry it through—could he succeed—the good would be recognized—never a doubt of that. If men were sometimes blind, God was always just.

In thought he sped forward of the coming appointment, and saw himself not only the apostle of the reform, but the chosen agent, the accredited go–between of Constantine and the young Mahommed. He remembered the points of negotiation between them. He would not require the Turk to yield the prophetic character of Mahomet; neither should the Byzantine's faith in Christ suffer curtailment; he would ask them, however, to agree to a new relation between Mahomet and Christ on the one side and God on the other—that, namely, long conceded, as having existed between God and

Elijah. And then, an article of the utmost materiality, the very soul of the recast religion, he would insist that they obligate themselves to worship God alone, worship being His exclusive prerogative, and that this condition of exclusive worship be prescribed the only test of fraternity in religion; all other worship to be punishable as heresy. Nor stopped he with Mahommed and Constantine; he doubted not bringing the Rabbis to such a treaty. How almost identical it was with the Judaism of Moses. The Bishop of Rome might protest. What matter? Romanism segregated must die. And so the isms of the Brahman and the Hindoo, so the Buddhist, the Confucian, the Mencian—they would all perish under the hammering of the union. Then, too, Time would make the work perfect, and gradually wear Christ and Mahomet out of mind—he and Time together. What if the task did take ages? He had an advantage over other reformers—he could keep his reform in motion—he could guide and direct it—he could promise himself life to see it in full acceptance. In the exuberance of triumphant feeling, he actually rejoiced in his doom, and for the moment imagined it more than a divine mercy.

CHAPTER IV

THE PANNYCHIDES

An invitation from the Emperor to remain and view the procession marching up the heights of Blacherne had been of itself a compliment; but the erection of a stand for the Prince turned the compliment into a personal honor. To say truth, however, he really desired to see the Pannychides, or in plain parlance, the Vigils. He had often heard of them as of prodigious effect upon the participants. Latterly they had fallen into neglect; and knowing how difficult it is to revive a dying custom, he imagined the spectacle would be poor and soon over. While reflecting on it, he looked out of the window and was surprised to see the night falling. He yielded then to restlessness, until suddenly an idea arose and absorbed him.

Suppose the Emperor won to his scheme; was its success assured? So used was he to thinking of the power of kings and emperors as the sole essential to the things he proposed that in this instance he had failed to concede importance to the Church; and probably he would have gone on in the delusion but for the Mysteries which were now to pass before him. They forced him to think of the power religious organizations exercise over men.

And this Church—this old Byzantine Church! Ay, truly! The Byzantine conscience was under its direction; it was the Father Confessor of the Empire; its voice in the common ear was the voice of God. To cast Christ out of its system would be like wrenching a man's heart out of his body. It was here and there—everywhere in fact—in signs, trophies, monuments—in crosses and images—in monasteries, convents, houses to the Saints, houses to the Mother. What could the Emperor do, if it were obstinate and defiant? The night beheld through the window crept into the Wanderer's

heart, and threatened to put out the light kindled there by the new–born hope with which he had come from the audience.

"The Church, the Church! It is the enemy I have to fear," he kept muttering in dismal repetition, realizing, for the first time, the magnitude of the campaign before him. With a wisdom in wickedness which none of his successors in design have shown, he saw the Christian idea in the bosom of the Church unassailable except a substitute satisfactory to its professors could be found. Was God a sufficient substitute? Perhaps—and he turned cold with the reflection—the Pannychides were bringing him an answer. It was an ecclesiastical affair, literally a meeting of Churchmen *en masse*. Where—when—how could the Church present itself to any man more an actuality in the flesh? Perhaps—and a chill set his very crown to crawling—perhaps the opportunity to study the spectacle was more a mercy of God than a favor of Constantine.

To his great relief, at length the officer who had escorted him from the Grand Gate came into the room.

"I am to have the honor," he said, cheerfully, "of conducting you to the stand His Majesty has prepared that you may at ease behold the Mysteries appointed for the night. The head of the procession is reported appearing. If it please you, Prince of India, we will set out."

"I am ready."

The position chosen for the Prince was on the right bank of a cut through which the road passed on its ascent from the arched gateway by the Chapel to the third terrace, and he was borne thither in his sedan.

Upon alighting, he found himself on a platform covered by a canopy, carpeted and furnished with one chair comfortably cushioned. At the right of the chair there was a pyramid of coals glowing in a brazier, and lest that might not be a sufficient provision against the damps of the hours, a great cloak was near at hand. In front of the platform he observed a pole securely planted and bearing a basket of inflammables ready for conversion into a torch. In short, everything needful to his well–being, including wine and water on a small tripod, was within reach.

Before finally seating himself the Prince stepped out to the brow of the terrace, whence he noticed the Chapel below him in the denser darkness of the trees about it like a pool. The gleam of armor on the area by the Grand Gate struck him with sinister effect. Flowers saluted him with perfume, albeit he could not see them. Not less welcome was the low music with which the brook cheered itself while dancing down to the harbor. Besides a cresset burning on the landing outside the Port entrance, two other lights were visible; one on the Pharos, the other on the great Galata tower, looking in the distance like large stars. With these exceptions, the valley and the hill opposite Blacherne, and the wide–reaching Metropolis beyond them, were to appearances a blacker cloud dropped from the clouded sky. A curious sound now came to him from the direction of the city. Was it a rising wind? Or a muffled roll from the sea? While wondering, some one behind him said:

"They are coming."

The voice was sepulchral and harsh, and the Prince turned quickly to the speaker.

"Ah, Father Theophilus!"

"They are coming," the Father repeated.

The Prince shivered slightly. The noise beyond the valley arose more distinctly.

"Are they singing?" he asked.

"Chanting," the other answered.

"Why do they chant?"

"Knowest thou our Scriptures?"

The Wanderer quieted a disdainful impulse, and answered:

"I have read them."

The Father continued:

"Presently thou wilt hear the words of Job: 'Oh, that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that thou wouldst keep me in secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldst appoint me a set time and remember me.'"

The Prince was startled. Why was one in speech so like a ghost selected his companion? And that verse, of all to him most afflicting, and which in hours of despair he had repeated until his very spirit had become colored with its reproachful plaint—who put it in the man's mouth?

The chant came nearer. Of melody it had nothing; nor did those engaged in it appear in the slightest attentive to time. Yet it brought relief to the Prince, willing as he was to admit he had never heard anything similar—anything so sorrowful, so like the wail of the damned in multitude. And rueful as the strain was, it helped him assign the pageant a near distance, a middle distance, and then interminability.

"There appear to be a great many of them," he remarked to the Father.

"More than ever before in the observance," was the reply.

"Is there a reason for it?"

"Our dissensions."

The Father did not see the pleased expression of his auditor's face, but proceeded: "Yes, our dissensions. They multiply. At first the jar was between the Church and the throne; now it is the Church against the Church—a Roman party and a Greek party. One man among us has concentrated in himself the learning and devotion of the Christian East. You will see him directly, George Scholarius. By visions, like those in which the old prophets received the counsel of God, he was instructed to revive the *Pannychides*. His messengers have gone hither and thither, to the monasteries, the convents, and the eremitic colonies wherever accessible. The greater the presence, he says, the greater the influence."

"Scholarius is a wise man," the Prince said, diplomatically.

"His is the wisdom of the Prophets," the Father answered.

"Is he the Patriarch?"

"No, the Patriarch is of the Roman party—Scholarius of the Greek."

"And Constantine?"

"A good king, truly, but, alas; he is cumbered with care of the State."

"Yes, yes," said the Prince. "And the care leads to neglect of his soul. Kings are sometimes to be pitied. But there is then a special object in the Vigils?"

"The Vigils to–night are for the restoration of the unities once more, that the Church may find peace and the State its power and glory again. God is in the habit of taking care of His own."

"Thank you, Father, I see the difference. Scholarius would intrust the State to the Holy Virgin; but Constantine, with a worldlier inspiration, adheres to the craft held by Kings immemorially. The object of the Vigils is to bring the Emperor to abandon his policy and defer to Scholarius?"

"The Emperor assists in the Mystery," the Father answered, vaguely.

The procession meantime came on, and when its head appeared in front of the Grand Gate three trumpeters blew a flourish which called the guards into line. A monk advanced and held parley with an officer; after which he was given a lighted torch, and passed under the portal in lead of the multitude. The trumpeters continued plying their horns, marking the slow ascent.

"Were this an army," said Father Theophilus, "it would not be so laborious; but, alas! the going of youth is nowhere so rapid as in a cloister; nor is age anywhere so feeble. Ten years kneeling on a stony floor in a damp cell brings the anchorite to forget he ever walked with ease."

The Prince scarcely heard him; he was interested in the little to be seen crossing the area below—a column four abreast, broken into unequal divisions, each division with a leader, who, at the gate, received a torch. Occasionally a square banner on a cross–stick appeared— occasionally a section in light–colored garments; more frequently a succession of heads without covering of any kind; otherwise the train was monotonously rueful, and in its slow movement out of the darkness reminded the spectator on the height of a serpent crawling endlessly from an underground den. Afterwhile the dim white of the pavement was obscured by masses stationary on the right and left of the column; these were the people stopping there because for them there was no further pursuit of the spectral parade.

The horns gave sonorous notice of the progress during the ascent. Now they were passing along the first terrace; still the divisions were incessant down by the gate—still the chanting continued, a dismal dissonance in the distance, a horrible discord near by. If it be true that the human voice is music's aptest instrument, it is also true that nothing vocalized in nature can excel it in the expression of diabolism.

Suddenly the first torch gleamed on the second terrace scarce an hundred yards from the Chapel.

"See him now there, behind the trumpeters—Scholarius!" said Father Theophilus, with a semblance of animation.

"He with the torch?"

"Ay!—And he might throw the torch away, and still be the light of the Church."

The remark did not escape the Prince. The man who could so impress himself upon a member of the court must be a power with his brethren of the gown generally. Reflecting thus, the discerning visitor watched the figure stalking on under the torch. There are men who are causes in great events, sometimes by superiority of nature, sometimes by circumstances. What if this were one of them? And forthwith the observer ceased fancying the mystical looking monk drawing the interminable train after him by the invisible bonds of a will mightier than theirs in combination—the fancy became a fact. "The procession will not stop at the Chapel," the Father said; "but keep on to the palace, where the Emperor will join it. If my Lord cares to see the passage distinctly, I will fire the basket here."

"Do so," the Prince replied.

The flambeau was fired.

It shed light over the lower terraces right and left, and brought the palace in the upper space into view from the base of the forward building to the Tower of Isaac; and here, close by, the Chapel with all its appurtenances, paved enclosure, speeding brook, solemn cypresses, and the wall and arched gateway at the hither side stood out in almost daytime clearness.

The road in the cut underfoot must bring the frocked host near enough to expose its spirit.

The bellowing of the horns frightened the birds at roost in the melancholy grove, and taking wing, they flew blindly about.

Then ensued the invasion of the enclosure in front of the Chapel—Scholarius next the musicians. The Prince saw him plainly; a tall man, stoop–shouldered, angular as a skeleton; his hood thrown back; head tonsured; the whiteness of the scalp conspicuous on account of the band of black hair at the base; the features high and thin, cheeks hollow, temples pinched. The dark brown cassock, leaving an attenuated neck completely exposed, hung from his frame apparently much too large for it. His feet disdained sandals. At the brook he halted, and letting the crucifix fall from his right hand, he stooped and dipped the member thus freed into the water, and rising flung the drops in air. Resuming the crucifix, he marched on.

It cannot be said there was admiration in the steady gaze with which the Prince kept the monk in eye; the attraction was stronger—he was looking for a sign from him. He saw the tall, nervous figure cross the brook with a faltering, uncertain step, pass the remainder of the pavement, the torch in one hand, the holy symbol in the other; then it disappeared under the arch of the gate; and when it had come through, the sharp espial was beforehand with it, and waiting. It commenced ascending the acute grade—now it was in the cut—and now, just below the Prince, it had but to look up, and its face would be on a level with his feet. At exactly the right moment, Scholarius did look up, and—stop.

The interchange of glances between the men was brief, and can be likened to nothing so aptly as sword blades crossing in a red light.

Possibly the monk, trudging on, his mind intent upon something which was part of a scene elsewhere, or on the objects and results of the solemnities in celebration, as yet purely speculative, might have been disagreeably surprised at discovering himself the subject of study by a stranger whose dress proclaimed him a foreigner; possibly the Prince's stare, which we have already seen was at times powerfully magnetic, filled

him with aversion and resentment; certain it is he raised his head, showing a face full of abhorrence, and at the same time waved the crucifix as if in exorcism.

The Prince had time to see the image thus presented was of silver on a cross of ivory wrought to wonderful realism. The face was dying, not dead; there were the spikes in the hands and feet, the rent in the side, the crown of thorns, and overhead the initials of the inscription: This is the King of the Jews. There was the worn, buffeted, bloodspent body, and the lips were parted so it was easy to think the sufferer in mid–utterance of one of the exclamations which have placed his Divinity forever beyond successful denial. The swift reversion of memory excited in the beholder might have been succeeded by remorse, but for the cry:

"Thou enemy of Jesus Christ—avaunt!"

It was the voice of Scholarius, shrill and high; and before the Prince could recover from the shock, before he could make answer, or think of answering, the visionary was moving on; nor did he again look back.

"What ails thee, Prince?"

The sepulchral tone of Father Theophilus was powerful over the benumbed faculties of His Majesty's guest; and he answered with a question:

"Is not thy friend Scholarius a great preacher?"

"On his lips the truth is most unctuous."

"It must be so—it must be so! For"—the Prince's manner was as if he were settling a grave altercation in his own mind—"for never did a man offer me the Presence so vitalized in an image. I am not yet sure but he gave me to see the Holy Son of the Immaculate Mother in flesh and blood exactly as when they put Him so cruelly to death. Or can it be, Father, that the effect upon me was in greater measure due to the night, the celebration, the cloud of ministrants, the serious objects of the Vigils?"

The answer made Father Theophilus happy as a man of his turn could be—he was furnished additional evidence of the spiritual force of Scholarius, his ideal.

"No," he answered, "it was God in the man."

All this time the chanting had been coming nearer, and now the grove rang with it. A moment, and the head of the first division must present itself in front of the Chapel. Could the Wanderer have elected then whether to depart or stay, the *Pannychides* would have had no further assistance from him—so badly had the rencounter with Scholarius shaken him. Not that he was afraid in the vulgar sense of the term. Before a man can habitually pray for death, he must be long lost to fear. If we can imagine conscience gone, pride of achievement, without which there can be no mortification or shame in defeat, may yet remain with him, a source of dread and weakness. The chill which shook Brutus in his tent the evening before Philippi was not in the least akin to terror. So with the Prince at this juncture. There to measure the hold of the Christian idea upon the Church, it seemed Scholarius had brought him an answer which finished his interest in the passing Vigils. In brief, the Reformer's interest in the Mystery was past, and he wished with his whole soul to retreat to the sedan, but a fascination held him fast.

"I think it would be pleasanter sitting," he said, and returned to the platform.

"If I presume to take the chair, Father," he added, "it is because I am older than thou."

Hardly was he thus at ease when a precentor, fat, and clad in a long gown, stepped out of the grove to the clear lighted pavement in front of the Chapel. His shaven head was thrown back, his mouth open to its fullest stretch, and tossing a white stick energetically up and down in the air, he intoned with awful distinctness: "The waters wear the stones. Thou washest away the things which grow out of the dust of the earth, and Thou destroyest the hopes of man."

The Prince covered his ears with his hands.

"Thou likest not the singing?" Father Theophilus asked, and continued: "I admit the graces have little to do with musical practice in the holy houses of the Fathers." But he for whom the comfort was meant made no

reply. He was repeating to himself: "Thou prevailest forever against him, and he passeth."

And to these words the head of the first division strode forward into the light. The Prince dropped his hands in time to hear the last verse: "But his flesh upon him shall have pain, and his soul within him shall mourn."

For whom was this? Did the singers know the significancy of the text to him? The answer was from God, and they were merely messengers bringing it. He rose to his feet; in his rebellious passion the world seemed to melt and swim about him. He felt a longing to burn, break, destroy—to strike out and kill. When he came to himself, Father Theophilus, who thought him merely wonder struck by the mass of monks in march, was saying in his most rueful tone: "Good order required a careful arrangement of the procession; for though the participants are pledged to godly life, yet they sometimes put their vows aside temporarily. The holiest of them have pride in their establishments, and are often too ready to resort to arms of the flesh to assert their privileges. The Fathers of the Islands have long been jealous of the Fathers of the city, and to put them together would be a signal for riot. Accordingly there are three grand divisions here—the monks of Constantinople, those of the Islands, the shores of the Bosphorus and the three seas, and finally the recluses and hermits from whatever quarter. Lo! first the Fathers of the Studium—saintly men as thou wilt see anywhere."

The speech was unusually long for the Father; a fortunate circumstance of which the Prince availed himself to recover his self–possession. By the time the brethren eulogized were moving up the rift at his feet, he was able to observe them calmly. They were in long gowns of heavy gray woollen stuff, with sleeves widening from the shoulders; their cowls, besides covering head and visage, fell down like capes. Cleanly, decent–looking men, they marched slowly and in order, their hands united palm to palm below their chins. The precentor failed to inspire them with his fury of song.

"These now coming," Father Theophilus said of the second fraternity," are conventuals of Petrion, who have their house looking out on the harbor

here. And these," he said of the third, "are of the Monastery of Anargyres—a very ancient society. The Emperor Michael, surnamed the Paphlegonian, died in one of their cells in 1041. Brotherhood with them is equivalent to saintship."

Afterwhile a somewhat tumultuous flock appeared in white skirts and loose yellow cloaks, their hair and beard uncut and flying. The historian apologized.

"Bear with them," he said; "they are mendicants from the retreats of Periblepte, in the quarter of Psammatica. You may see them on the street corners and quays, and in all public places, sick, blind, lame and covered with sores. They have St. Lazarus for patron. At night an angel visits them with healing. They refuse to believe the age of miracles is past."

The city monastics were a great host carrying banners with the name of their Brotherhoods inscribed in golden letters; and in every instance the Hegumen, or Abbot, preceded his fraternity torch in hand.

A company in unrelieved black marched across the brook, and their chanting was lugubrious as their garb.

"Petra sends us these Fathers," said Theophilus—"Petra over on the south side. They sleep all day and watch at night. The second coming they say will happen in the night, because they think that time most favorable for the trumpeting herald and the splendor of the manifestations."

Half an hour of marching—men in gray and black and yellow, a few in white—men cowled—men shorn and unshorn—barefooted men and men in sandals—a river of men in all moods, except jovial and happy, toiling by the observing stand, seldom an upturned face, spectral, morose, laden body and mind—young and old looking as if just awakened after ages of entombment;—a half hour of dismal chanting the one chapter from the book of the man in the land of Uz, of all utterances the most dismal;—a half hour of waiting by the Prince for one kindly sign, without discovering it—a half hour, in which, if the comparison be not too strong, he was like a soul keeping watch over its own abandoned body. Then Father Theophilus said:

"From the cloisters of St. James of Manganese! The richest of the monasteries of Constantinople, and the most powerful. It furnishes Sancta Sophia with renowned preachers. Its brethren cultivate learning. Their library is unexcelled, and they boast that in the hundreds of years of their society life, they had never an heretic. Before their altars the candles are kept burning and trimmed forever. Their numbers are recruited from the noblest families. Young men to whom the army is open prefer God–service in the elegant retirement of St. James of Manganese. They will interest you, Prince; and after them we will have the second grand division."

"Brethren of the Islands?"

"Yes, of the Islands and the sea–shores."

Upon the pavement then appeared a precentor attired like a Greek priest of the present day; a rimless hat black and high, and turned slightly outward at the top; a veil of the same hue; the hair gathered into a roll behind, and secured under the hat; a woollen gown very dark, glossy, and dropping in ample folds unconfined from neck to shoe. The Hegumen followed next, and because of his age and infirmities a young man carried the torch for him. The chanting was sweet, pure, and in perfect time. All these evidences of refinement and respectability were noticed by the Prince, and looking at the torch–bearer again, he recognized the young monk, his room–mate in the White Castle.

"Knowest thou the youth yonder?" he asked, pointing to Sergius.

"A Russian recently arrived," the Father replied. "Day before yesterday he was brought to the palace and presented to the Emperor by the Princess Irene. He made a great impression."

The two kept their eyes on the young man until he disappeared ascending the hill.

"He will be heard from;" and with the prediction the Prince gave attention to the body of the Brotherhood.

"These men have the bearing of soldiers," he said presently.

"Their vows respecting war are liberal. If the *panagia* were carried to the walls, they would accompany it in armor."

The Prince smiled. He had not the faith in the Virgin of Blacherne which the Father's answer implied.

The St. James' were long in passing. The Prince kept them in sight to the last four. They were the aristocracy of the Church, prim, proud; as their opportunities were more frequent, doubtless they were more wicked than their associates of the humbler fraternities; yet he could not promise himself favor from their superior liberality. On the contrary, having a great name for piety to defend, if a test offered, they were the more certain to be hard and vindictive—to send a heretic to the stake, and turn a trifling variation from the creed into heresy.

"Who is this?" the Prince exclaimed, as a noble–looking man in full canonicals stepped out of the cypress shadows, first of the next division.

"Master of Ceremonies for the Church," Father Theophilus replied. "He is the wall between the Islanders and the Metropolitans."

"And he who walks with him singing?"

"The *Protopsolete*—leader of the Patriarch's Choir."

Behind this singer the monks of the Isles of the Princes! In movement, order, dress, like their predecessors in the march—Hegumen with their followers in gray, black and white—hands palm to palm prayerfully—chanting sometimes better, sometimes worse—never a look upward but always down, as if Heaven were a hollow in the earth, an abyss at their feet, and they about to step into it.

The Prince was beginning to tire. Suddenly he thought of the meeting of pilgrims at El Zaribah. How unlike was the action there and here! That had been a rush, an inundation, as it were, by the sea, fierce, mad, a passion of Faith fostered by freedom; this, slow, solemn, sombre, oppressive—what was it like? Death in Life, and burial by programme so rigid there must not be a groan more or a tear less. He saw Law in it all—or was it imposition, force, choice smothered by custom, fashion masquerading in the guise of Faith? The hold of Christ upon the Church began to look possible of measurement.

"Roti first!" said the Father. "Rocky and bare, scarce a bush for a bird or grass for a cricket. Ah, verily he shall love God dearly or hate the world mortally who of free will chooses a cloister for life at Roti!"

The brethren of the three convents of the Island marched past clad in short brown frocks, bareheaded, barefooted. The comments of the historian were few and brief.

"Poor they look," he said of the first one, "and poor they are, yet Michael Rhangabe and Romain Lacapene were glad to live and die with them." Of the second: "When Romain Diogenes built the house these inhabit, he little dreamed it would shelter him, a refugee from the throne." Of the third: "Dardanes was a great general. In his fortunate days he built a tower on Roti with one cell in it; in an evil hour he aspired to the throne—failed—lost his eyes, retired to his lonesome tower—by his sanctity there drew a fraternity to him, and died. That was hundreds of years ago. The brethren still pray for his soul. Be it that evil comes of good; not less does good come of evil—and so God keeps the balances."

In the same manner he descanted on the several contingents from Antigone as they strode by; then of those from God's houses at Halki, the pearl of the Marmora; amongst them the monastery of John the Precursor, and the Convents of St. George, Hagia Trias, and lastly the Very Holy House of the All Holy Mother of God, founded by John VIII. Palaeologus. After them, in turn, the consecrated from Prinkipo, especially those from the Kamares of the Basilissa, Irene, and the Convent of the Transfiguration.

The faithful few from the solitary Convent on the Island of Oxia, and the drab–gowned abstinents of the monastery of Plati, miserables given to the abnormity of mixing prayer and penance with the cultivation of snails for the market in Constantinople, were the last of the Islanders.

Then in a kind of orderly disorganization the claustral inculpables from holy houses on Olympus down by the Dardanelles, the Bosphorus, and the Bithynian shore behind the Isles of the Princes, and some from retreats in the Egean and along the Peloponnesus, their walls now dust, their names forgotten.

"Where is the procession going?" the Prince now asked.

"Look behind you—up along the front of the palace."

And casting his eyes thither, the questioner beheld the ground covered with a mass of men not there before.

"What are they doing?"

"Awaiting the Emperor. Only the third grand division is wanting now; when it is up His Majesty will appear."

"And descend to the Chapel?"

"Yes."

For a time a noise more like the continuous, steady monotone of falling water than a chant had been approaching from the valley, making its darkness vocal. It threatened the gates awhile; now it was at the gates. The Prince's wonder was great, and to appease it Father Theophilus explained:

"The last division is at hand."

In the dim red light over the area by the gate below, the visitor beheld figures hurriedly issuing from the night—figures in the distance so wild and fantastic they did not at first seem human. They left no doubt, however, whence the sound proceeded. The white sand of the road up the terraces was beaten to dust under the friction and pressure of the thousands of feet gone before; this third division raised it into an attending cloud, and the cloud and the noise were incessant.

Once more the Prince went out to the brink of the terrace. The monotony of the pageant was broken; something new was announcing itself. Spectres—devils—gnomes and jinn of the Islamitic Solomon—rakshakas and hanumen of the Eastern Iliads—surely this miscellany was a composition of them all. They danced along the way and swung themselves and each other, howling like dervishes in frenzy. Again the birds took wing and flew blindly above the cypresses, and the end of things seemed about to burst when a yell articulate yet unintelligible shook the guarded door of the venerable Chapel.

Then the demoniacs—the Prince could not make else of them—leaping the brook, crowding the pent enclosure, hasting to the arched exit, were

plainly in view. Men almost naked, burned to hue of brick–dust; men in untanned sheepskin coats and mantles; men with every kind of headgear, turbans, handkerchiefs, cowls; men with hair and beard matted and flying; now one helped himself to a louder yell by tossing in air the dirty garment he had torn from his body, hirsute as a goat's; now one leaped up agile as a panther; now one turned topsy–turvy; now groups of them swirled together like whimsical eddies in a pool. Some went slowly, their arms outspread in silent ecstasy; some stalked on with parted lips and staring eyes, trance–like or in dead drunkenness of soul; nevertheless the great majority of them, too weary and far spent for violent exertion, marched with their faces raised, and clapping their hands or beating their breasts, now barking short and sharp, like old hounds dreaming, then finishing with long–drawn cries not unlike the ending of a sorrowful chorus. Through the gate they crowded, and at sight of their faces full of joy unto madness, the Prince quit pitying them, and, reminded of the Wahabbees at El Zaribah, turned to Father Theophilus.

"In God's name," he said, "who are these?"

"A son of India thou, and not know them at sight?"

There was surprise in the question, and a degree of unwarranted familiarity, yet the Father immediately corrected himself, by solemnly adding: "Look there at that one whirling his mantle of unshorn skin over his head. He has a cave on Mt. Olympus furnished with a stool, a crucifix, and a copy of the Holy Scriptures; he sleeps on the stone; the mantle is his bedding by night, his clothing by day. He raises vegetables, and they and snow–water seeping through a crevice in his cavern subsist him… And the next him—the large man with the great coat of camel's hair which keeps him scratched as with thorns—he is from the Monastery of St. Auxentius, the abode of a powerful fraternity of ascetics. A large proportion of this wing of the celebrants is of the same austere house. You will know them by the penitential, dun–colored garment—they wear no other… Yonder is a brother carrying his right arm at a direct angle above his shoulder, stiff and straight as a stick of seasoned oak. He is of a colony of Stylites settled on this shore of the upper Bosphorus overlooking the Black Sea. He could

not lower the arm if he wished to; but since it is his certificate of devoutness, the treasures of the earth laid at his feet in a heap would be insufficient to induce him to drop it though for an instant. His colony is one of many like it. Spare him thy pity. He believes the clinch of that hand holds fast the latch of Heaven… The shouters who have just entered the arch in a body have hermitaries in close grouping around the one failing monastery on Plati, and live on lentils and snails; aside from which they commit themselves to Christ, and so abound in faith that the Basileus in his purple would be very happy were he true master of a tithe of their happiness… Hast thou not enough, O Prince? Those crossing the brook now?—Ah, yes! They are anchorites from Anderovithos, the island. Pitiable creatures looked at from the curtained windows of a palace—pitiable, and abandoned by men and angels! Be not sure. Everything is as we happen to see it—a bit of philosophy, which, as they despise the best things secularly considered of this life, steels them to indifference for what you and I, and others not of their caste, may think. They have arrived at a summit above the corrupting atmosphere of the earth, where every one of them has already the mansion promised him by our Blessed Lord, and where the angels abide and delight to serve him… For the rest, O Prince, call them indifferently recluses, hermits, anticenobites, mystics, martyrs, these from Europe, those from isolations deep somewhere in Asia. Who feeds them? Did not ravens feed Elijah? Offer them white bread and robes of silk, yesterday's wear of a king. 'What!' they will ask. 'Shall any man fare better than John the Forerunner?' Speak to them of comfortable habitations, and they will answer with the famous saying, 'Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.' What more is there to be said? Thou seest them, thou knowest them."

Yes, the Prince knew them. Like the horde which stood by the Black Stone envious of Mirza's dying, these were just as ready to die for Christ. He smiled grimly, and thought of Mahommed, and how easy the Church had made the conquest of which he was dreaming.

It was with a sense of relief he beheld the tail of the division follow its body up to the palace.

Then, last of all, came the dignitaries of the Church, the Cartulaire, least in rank, with many intermediates, up to the Cyncelle, who, next to the absent Patriarch, represented him. If what had preceded in the procession was poor and unpretentious, this part was splendid to excess. They were not more than eighteen or twenty in number, but they walked singly with considerable intervals between them; while on the right and left of each, a liveried servant carried a torch which gave him to be distinctly seen. And the flashing of gold on their persons was wonderful to the spectator. Why not? This rare and anointed body was the Church going in solemnity to assist the Basileus in a high ceremony.

Afterwhile the Emperor appeared descending to the Chapel.

To the Prince's amazement, he was in a plain, priestly black frock, without crown, sword, sceptre or guard; and so did his guise compare with the magnificence of the ecclesiastics surrounding him, he actually seemed in their midst a prisoner or a penitent. He passed his visitor like one going from the world forgetting and forgot.

"An explanation, Father," said the Prince. "The Church is in its robes, but my august friend, the Emperor, looks as if he had suffered dethronement."

"Thou wilt presently see His Majesty enter the Chapel alone. The legend supposes him there in presence directly of God; if so, what merit would there be in regalia? Would his sword or sceptre make his supplication more impressive?"

The Prince bowed.

And while he watched, the gold–clad escort halted before the Holy House, the door opened, and Constantine went in unattended. Then, the door being shut behind him, the clergy knelt, and remained kneeling. The light from the torches was plenteous there, making the scene beautiful.

And yet further, while he stood watching, the trumpeting and chanting on the level in front of the palace behind him ceased, and a few minutes afterwards, he was aware of the noise of many feet rushing in a scramble from all directions to the Chapel. Here and there flambeaux streamed out, with hundreds of dark–gowned excited figures speeding after them as best they could.

The bank the Prince occupied was overrun, like other contiguous spaces. The object of the invaders was to secure a position near the revered building as possible; for immediately on attaining it they dropped to their knees, and began counting their rosaries and mumbling prayers. At length it befell that the terraces far and near were densely crowded by monks in low recitation.

"My Lord," said Father Theophilus, in a tone of reserved depth, "the Mystery is begun. There is no more to be seen. Good–night!" And without ado, he too knelt where he stood, beads in hand, eyes fixed upon the one point of devotional interest.

When the sedan was brought, the Prince gave one last glance at the scene, feeling it was to be thenceforward and forever a burden on his memory. He took in and put away the weather–stained Chapel, centre of so much travail; the narrow court in front of it brilliantly lighted and covered with priests high and low in glittering vestments; the cypresses looming skyward, stately and stiff, like conical monuments: the torches scattered over the grounds, revealing patches of men kneeling, their faces turned toward the Chapel: the mumbling and muttering from parts unlighted telling of other thousands in like engagement. He had seen battle–fields fresh in their horrors; decks of ships still bloody; shores strewn with wreckage and drowned sailors, and the storm not spent; populous cities shaken down by earthquakes, the helpless under the ruins pleading for help; but withal never had he seen anything which affected him as did that royal park at mid of night, given up to that spectral multitude!

It seemed he could not get away from the spectacle soon enough; for after issuing from the Grand Gate, he kept calling to his carriers, impatiently: "Faster, my men, faster!"

CHAPTER V

A PLAGUE OF CRIME

Sergius' life in Constantinople had been almost void of incident. His introduction to the Patriarch by the Princess Irene started him well with that reverend official, whose confidence and love she commanded to a singular degree. His personal qualities, however, were very helpful. The gentleness of his nature, his youth, his simplicity, respectfulness, intelligence and obvious piety were all in his favor; at the same time the strongest attraction he possessed with the strangers amongst whom he found himself was his likeness according to the received Byzantine ideal to Christ. He had a habit, moreover, of walking slowly, and with a quiet tread, his head lowered, his hands clasped before him. Coming in this mood suddenly upon persons, he often startled them; at such times, indeed, the disturbed parties were constrained to both observe and forgive him—he reminded them so strikingly of the Nazarene as He must have looked while in solitary walks by the sea or along the highways of Galilee. Whatever the cause, it is very certain His Serenity, the Patriarch, from mere attention to the young Russian, passed speedily to interest in him, and manifested it in modes pleasant and noticeable. By his advice, Sergius attached himself to the Brotherhood of the Monastery of St. James of Manganese. This was the first incident in his city life out of the usual. The second was his presentation at court, where he was not less successful with the Emperor than he had been with the Patriarch. Yet Sergius was not happy. His was the old case of a spirit willing, even anxious, to do, but held in restraint. He saw about him such strong need of saving action; and the Christian plan, as he understood it, was so simple and efficacious. There was no difference in the value of souls. Taking Christ's own words, everything was from the Father, and He held the gates of Heaven open for the beggar and the emperor alike. Why not return to the plan devised, practised, and exemplified by the Saviour Himself? The idea bore heavily

upon his mind, and accounted for the bent head and slow step fast becoming habitudes. At times the insurgent impulses seemed beyond control. This was particularly when he walked in crowded places; for then the people appeared an audience summoned and ready to hear him; he had only to go into their midst, call to them, and begin speaking; but often as he beheld the calm, patient, pleading face of the Princess Irene, and heard her say ever so gently: "Wait, wait! I know the situation—you do not. Our object is the most good. God will send the opportunity. Then martyrdom, if it come, is going to Heaven. Wait—I will give you the signal. You are to speak for me as well as yourself. You are to be my voice"—so often he grew reconciled.

There was another trouble more difficult of comprehension and description. Under its influence the sky did not look so blue as formerly; the breeze was less refreshing; the sun where it scattered its golden largesse over the sea failed to relieve it of dulness; and in all things, himself included, there was something wanting—exactly what he could not tell. However, as he had been indulging comparisons of life in Constantinople with life in Bielo–Osero, and longing for the holy quiet of the latter, he concluded he was homesick, and was ashamed. It was childishness! The Great Example had no home! And with that thought he struggled manfully to be a man forever done with such weaknesses.

It became his wont of afternoons when the weather was tolerable to seek the city wall opposite the old Chalcedonian point. In going thither, he sometimes passed through the Hippodrome and Sta. Sophia, both in such contact to the collection of palaces known as the Bucoleon that each might have been fairly considered an appurtenance of the other. The exercises in the spacious palaestrae had small interest for him; there was always such evident rancor between the factions Blue and Green. The dome of the great Church he regarded man's best effort at construction, beyond which there was nothing more attainable; but how it dwindled and faded when from the wall he looked at the sky, the sea, and the land, the handiworks of God!

On the wall, at a point marked by a shallow angle, there was a cracked stone bench, offering seawardly a view of the Isles of the Princes, and the

Asian domain beyond Broussa to the Olympian heights; westwardly, the Bucoleon and its terraced gardens were near by, and above them in the distance the Tower of Isaac Angelus arose over Blacherne, like a sentinel on guard against the opposing summits of Galata and Pera. From the bench, the walk, besides being wide and smooth, extended, with a slight curvature northward to the Acropolis, now Point Serail, and on the south to the Port of Julian. The airy promenade thus formed was reached by several stairs intermediate the landmarks mentioned; yet the main ascent was near the Imperial stables, and it consisted of a flight of stone steps built against the inner face of the wall, like a broad buttress. This latter was for the public, and of sunny days it was used incessantly. Everybody in the category of invalids affected it in especial, since litters and sedans were not inhibited there. In short, the popularity of this mural saunter can be easily imagined.

The afternoon of the day the Prince of India was in audience by the Emperor's invitation, Sergius was the sole occupant of the stone bench. The hour was pleasant; the distant effects were perfect; birds and boats enlivened the air and water; and in listening to the swish of waves amongst the rocks and pebbles below, so like whisperings, he forgot where he was, and his impatience and melancholy, and the people strolling negligently past. One of his arms lay along the edge of the bulwark before him, and he was not thinking so much as simply enjoying existence. To such as noticed him he appeared a man in the drowsy stage next to sleep.

Afterwhile a voice aroused him, and, without moving, he became aware of two men stopped and talking. He could not avoid hearing them.

"She is coming," said one.

"How do you know?" the other asked.

"Have I not told you I keep a spy on the old Prince's house? A messenger from him has just reported the chair arrived for her; and this being her favorite stroll, she will be here presently."

"Have you considered the risks of your project?"

"Risks? Pah!"

The exclamation was with a contemptuous laugh.

"But they have grown since last night," the other persisted. "The Indian is now at the Palace, His Majesty's guest."

"Yes, I had report of that also; but I have studied the game, and if you fear to join me, I will see it through alone. As an offence against law, it is abduction, not murder; and the penalty, imprisonment, can be easily changed to banishment, which with me means at the utmost a short absence to give friends an opportunity to prepare for my return. Consider, moreover, the subject of the offence will be a woman. Can you name an instance in which the kidnapper of a woman has been punished?—I mean in our time?"

"True, women are the cheapest commodity in the market; therefore"—

"I understand," the first speaker interposed, a little impatiently, "but Princes of India are not common in Constantinople, while their daughters are less so. See the temptation! Besides, in the decadence of our Byzantine empire, the criminal laws fail worse and worse of execution. Only last night my father, delivering a lecture, said neglect in this respect was one of the reasons of the Empire's going. Only the poor and degraded suffer penalties now. And I—pah! What have I to fear? Or thou? And from whom? When the girl's loss is discovered—you observe I am viewing the affair in its most malignant aspect—I know the course the Prince will take. He will run to the palace; there he will fall at the Emperor's feet, tell his tale of woe, and"—

"And if thou art denounced?"

The conspirator laughed again. "The worse for the Prince," he at length replied. "The Hegumen, my honored father, will follow him to the palace, and—but let the details go! The relations between the Basileus and the Church are strained to breaking; and the condition is not sanable while the quarrel between the Patriarch and Scholarius waxes hotter."

"The Patriarch and Scholarius quarrelling? I had not heard of that."

"Openly, openly! His Majesty and the Patriarch are tenderly sympathetic. What more is wanting to set the Prophet scolding? The Patriarch, it is now

known, will not be at the *Pannychides* to–night. His health began failing when, over his objection, it was decided to hold the Mystery, and last week he betook himself to the Holy Mountain. This morning the Prophet"—

"Thou meanest Scholarius?"

"Scholarius denounced him as an *azymite*, which is bad, if true; as unfaithful to God and the Church, which is worse; and as trying to convert the Emperor into an adherent of the Bishop of Rome, which, considering the Bishop is Satan unchained, will not admit of a further descent in sin. The Mystery tonight is Scholarius' scheme in contravention of His Serenity's efforts. Oh, it is a quarrel, and a big one, involving Church and State, and the infallibility of our newly risen Jeremiah. Thus full–handed, thinkest thou in a suit the Prince of India against the venerable Hegumen of all the St. James', His Majesty will hesitate? Is thy opinion of him as a politician so uncomplimentary? Think again, I say—think again!"

"Thy father's Brotherhood are His Majesty's friends!"

"Ah, the very point! They despise Scholarius now, and what an ado, what a political display, to drive them into his arms! The Princes of India, though they were numerous as the spectre caravan, could not carry influence that far."

Here there was a rest in the conversation.

"Well, since thou wilt not be persuaded to let the enterprise go," the protesting friend next said, "at least agree with me that it is indiscreet to speak of it in a place public as this."

The laugh of the conspirator was heartier than before.

"Ah, hadst thou warned me not to speak of it to the"—

"Enough of that! The Prince of India is nothing to me—thou art my friend."

"Agree with me then that thou hast ears, while the public"—

"Have not, thou wouldst say. Still there are things which may not be whispered in a desert without being overheard."

"The Pagans who went before us had a god of wisdom, and they called him Hermes. I should say thou hast been to school to him. 'Twas he,

doubtless, who taught outlaws to seek safety in crowded cities. By the same philosophy, where can one talk treason more securely than on this wall? Afraid of discovery! Not I, unless thou mumblest in thy sleep. We go about our good intents—the improvement of our fortune for instance—with awful care, and step by step, fortifying. The practice is applicable to wickedness. I am no bungler. I will tell thee a tale… Thou knowest the Brotherhood of the Monastery of St. James of Manganese is very ancient, and that the house in which it is quartered is about as old as the Brotherhood. Their archives are the richest in the empire. They have a special chamber and a librarian. Were he of the mind, he might write a history of Constantinople by original data without leaving his library. Fortunately the mere keepers of books seldom write books… My father's office is in the Monastery, and I frequently find myself in his company there. He never fails to improve the opportunity to lecture me, for he is a good man. One day, by invitation, I accompanied the librarian to his place of keeping, and saw it, and wondered how he could be willing to give his days—he is now an old man—to such a mass of rot and smells. I spare you mention of the many things he showed me; for there was but one of real ado with what we are considering, an old document illuminated with an untarnished chrysobula. 'Here,' said he, 'is something curious.' The text was short—writers in those days knew the tricks of condensation, and they practised them virtuously. I asked him to give it to me—he refused—he would sooner have given me the last lock on his head, which is a great deal, seeing that hair grows precious exactly as it grows scantier. So I made him hold the lamp while I read… The document was dated about A.D. 1300—a century and a half gone, and proved to be a formal report by the Patriarch to a council of Bishops and Hegumen… Thou knowest, I am sure, the great cistern; not the Philoxenus, but the larger one, with an entrance west of Sta. Sophia, sometimes called the Imperial, because built by the first Constantine and enlarged by Justinian."

"I know it."

"Well, there was a great ceremony there one day; the same with which the report was concerned. The clergy attended in force and panoply led by His Serenity in person—monks, nuns, deacons and deaconesses—in a

word, the Church was present. The cistern had been profaned. A son of Satan, moved by a most diabolical ingenuity, had converted it into a den of wickedness surpassing sinful belief; and the procession and awful conclave were to assist His Serenity in restoring the water to wholesomeness, impossible, in the belief of consumers, except by solemn exorcism… Heed now, my friend—I am about to tap the heart of my story. A plague struck the city—a plague of crime. A woman disappeared. There was search for her, but without success. The affair would have been dismissed within the three days usually allotted wonders of the kind, had not another like it occurred—and then another. The victims, it was noticed, were young and beautiful, and as the last one was of noble family the sensation was universal. The whole capital organized for rescue. While the hunt was at its height, a fourth unfortunate went the way of the others. Sympathy and curiosity had been succeeded by anxiety; now the public was aroused to anger, and the parents of handsome girls were sore with fear. Schemes for discovery multiplied; ingenuity was exhausted; the government took part in the chase—all in vain. And there being then a remission in the disappearance, the theory of suicide was generally accepted. Quiet and confidence were returning, when, lo! the plague broke out afresh! Five times in five weeks Sta. Sophia was given to funeral services. The ugly women, and the halt, and those long hopeless of husbands shared the common terror. The theory of suicide was discarded. It was the doing of the Turks, everybody said. The Turks were systematically foraging Constantinople to supply their harems with Christian beauty; or if the Turks were innocent, the devil was the guilty party. On the latter presumption, the Church authorities invented a prayer of special application. Could anything better signify the despair of the community? A year passed—two years—three—and though every one resolved himself into a watchman and hunter; though heralds cried rewards in the Emperor's name three times each day on the street corners, and in every place of common resort; though the fame of the havoc, rapine, spoliation, or whatsoever it may please thee to call the visitation, was carried abroad until everybody here and there knew every particular come to light concerning it, with the pursuit, and the dragging and fishing

in the sea, never a clew was found. One—two—three years, during which at intervals, some long, some short, the ancient Christian centre kept on sealing its doors, and praying. Finally the disappearances were about to be accepted as incidents liable to happen at any time to any young and pretty woman. They were placed in the category with death. There was mourning by friends—that was about all. How much longer the mystery would have continued may not be said… Now accidents may not have brought the world about, yet the world could not get along without accidents. To illustrate. A woman one day, wanting water for her household, let a bucket down one of the wells of the cistern, and drew up a sandal slippery and decaying. A sliver buckle adhered to it. Upon inspecting the prize, a name was observed graven on its underside. The curious came to see—there was discussion—at length an examiner blessed with a good memory coupled the inscription with one of the lost women. It was indeed her name! A clew to the great mystery was at last obtained. The city was thrown into tumult, and an exploration of the cistern demanded. The authorities at first laughed. 'What!' they said. 'The Royal reservoir turned into a den of murder and crime unutterable by Christians!' But they yielded. A boat was launched on the darkened waters—But hold!"

The voice of the speaker changed. Something was occurring to stop the story. Sergius had succumbed to interest in it; he was listening with excited sense, yet kept his semblance of sleep.

"Hold!" the narrator repeated, in an emphatic undertone. "See what there is in knowing to choose faithful allies! My watchman was right. She comes—she is here!"

"Who is here?"

"She—the daughter of the old Indian. In the sedan to my left—look!"

Sergius, catching the reply, longed to take the direction to himself, and look, for he was comprehending vaguely. A blindfolded man can understand quite well, if he is first informed of the business in progress, or if it be something with which he is familiar; imagination seems then to take the place of eyes. A detective, having overheard the conversation between the two men, had not required sight of them; but the young monk

was too recently from the cloisters of Bielo–Osero to be quick in the discernment of villanies. He knew the world abounded in crime, but he had never dealt with it personally; as yet it was a destroying wolf howling in the distance. He yearned to see if what he dimly surmised were true—if the object at the moment so attractive to his dangerous neighbors were indeed the daughter of the strange Indian he had met at the White Castle. His recollection of her was wonderfully distinct. Her face and demeanor when he assisted her from the boat had often reverted to his thought. They spoke to him so plainly of simplicity and dependence, and she seemed so pure and beautiful! And making the acknowledgment to himself, his heart took to beating quick and drum–like. He heard the shuffle and slide of the chairmen going; when they ceased a new and strange feeling came and possessed itself of his spirit, and led it out after her. Still he managed to keep his head upon his arm.

"By the saintly patron of thy father's Brotherhood, she is more than lovely! I am almost persuaded."

"Ah, I am not so mad as I was!" the conspirator replied, laughing; then he changed to seriousness, and added, like one speaking between clinched teeth—"I am resolved to go on. I will have her—come what may, I will have her! I am neither a coward nor a bungler. Thou mayst stay behind, but I have gone too far to retreat. Let us follow, and see her again—my pretty Princess!"

"Stay—a moment."

Perception was breaking in on Sergius. He scarcely breathed.

"Well?" was the answer.

"You were saying that a boat was launched in the cistern. Then what?"

"Of discovery? Oh, yes—the very point of my argument! A raft was found moored between four of the great pillars in the cistern, and there was a structure on it with furnished rooms. A small boat was used for going and coming."

"Wonderful!"

"Come—or we will lose the sight of her."

"But what else?"

"Hooks, such as fishermen use in hunting lobsters were brought, and by dragging and fishing the missing women were brought to light—that is, their bones were brought to light. More I will tell as we go. I will not stay longer."

Sergius heard them depart, and presently he raised his head. His blood was cold with horror. He was having the awful revelation which sooner or later bursts upon every man who pursues a walk far in life.

CHAPTER VI

A BYZANTINE GENTLEMAN OF THE PERIOD

Sergius kept his seat on the bench; but the charm of the glorious prospect spread out before it was gone.

Two points were swimming in his consciousness, like motes in a mist: first, there was a conspiracy afoot; next, the conspiracy was against the daughter of the Prince of India.

When at the door of the old Lavra upon the snow–bound shore of the White Lake, he bade Father Hilarion farewell and received his blessing, and the commission of an Evangel, the idea furthest from him was to signalize his arrival in Constantinople by dropping first thing into love. And to be just, the idea was now as distant from him as ever; yet he had a vision of the child–faced girl he met on the landing at the White Castle in the hands of enemies, and to almost any other person the shrinking it occasioned would have been strange, if not suspicious. His most definite feeling was that something ought to be done in her behalf.

Besides this the young monk had another incentive to action. In the colloquy overheard by him the chief speaker described himself a son of the Hegumen of the St. James'. The St. James'! His own Brotherhood! His own Hegumen! Could a wicked son have been born to that excellent man? Much easier to disbelieve the conspirator; still there were traditions of the appearance of monsters permitted for reasons clear at least to Providence. This might be an instance of the kind. Doubtless the creature carried on its countenance or person evidences of a miracle of evil. In any event there could be no harm in looking at him.

Sergius accordingly arose, and set out in pursuit of the conspirators. Could he overtake the sedan, they were quite certain to be in the vicinity, and he doubted not discovering them.

The steps of the sedan–carriers, peculiarly quick and sliding, seemed in passing the bench to have been going northwardly toward Point Demetrius. Thither he first betook himself.

In the distance, over the heads of persons going and coming, he shortly beheld the top of a chair in motion, and he followed it rapidly, fearing its occupant might quit the wall by the stairs near the stables of the Bucoleon. But when it was borne past that descent he went more leisurely, knowing it must meet him on the return.

Without making the Point, however, the chair was put about toward him. Unable to discover any one so much as suggestive of the plotters, and fearing a mistake, he peered into the front window of the painted box. A woman past the noon of life gave him back in no amiable mood the stare with which he saluted her.

There was but one explanation: he should have gone down the wall southwardly. What was to be done? Give up the chase? No, that would be to desert his little friend. And besides he had not put himself within hearing of the design against her—it was a doing of Providence. He started back on his trace.

The error but deepened his solicitude. What if the victim was then being hurried away?

At the head of the stairway by the stables he paused; as it was deserted, he continued on almost running—on past the cracked bench—past the Cleft Gate. Now, in front, he beheld the towers of the imperial residence bearing the name Julian, and he was upbraiding himself for indecision, and loading his conscience with whatever grief might happen the poor girl, when he beheld a sedan coming toward him. It was very ornate, and in the distance shone with burnishments—it was the chair—hers. By it, on the right hand, strode the gigantic negro who had so astonished him at the White Castle. He drew a long breath, and stopped. They would be bold who in daylight assailed that king of men!

And he was taking note of the fellow's barbaric finery, the solemn stateliness of his air, and the superb indifference he manifested to the stare of passers–by, when a man approached the chair on the opposite side. The

curtain of the front window was raised, and through it, Sergius observed the inmate draw hastily away from the stranger, and drop a veil over her face.

Here was one of the parties for whom he was looking. Where was the other? Then the man by the left window looked back over his shoulder as if speaking, and out of the train of persons following the sedan, one stepped briskly forward, joined the intruder, and walked with him long enough to be spoken to, and reply briefly; after which he fell back and disappeared. This answered the inquiry.

Assured now of one of the conspirators in sight, the monk resolved to await the coming up. Through the front window of the carriage, which was truly a marvel of polish and glitter, the girl might recognize him; perhaps she would speak; or possibly the negro might recall him; in either event he would have an excuse for intervention.

Meantime, calmly as he could—for he was young, and warm blooded, and in all respects a good instrument to be carried away by righteous indignation—he took careful note of the stranger, who kept his place as if by warrant, occasionally addressing the shrinking maiden.

Sergius was now more curious than angry; and he cared less to know who the conspirator was than how he looked. His surprise may be imagined when, the subject of investigation having approached near enough to be perfectly observed, instead of a monster marked, like Cain, he appeared a graceful, though undersized person, with an agreeable countenance. The most unfavorable criticism he provoked was the loudness—if the word can be excused—of his dress.

A bright red cloak, hanging in ample folds from an exaggerated buckle of purple enamel on his left shoulder, draped his left side; falling open on the right, it was caught by another buckle just outside the right knee. The arrangement loosed the right arm, but was a serious hamper to walking, and made it inconvenient to get out the rapier, the handle of which was protrusively suggested through the cloak. A tunic of bright orange color, short in sleeve and skirt, covered his body. Where undraped, tight–fitting hose terminating in red shoes, flashed their elongated black and yellow

stripes with stunning effect. A red cap, pointed at top, and rolled up behind, but with a long visor–like peak shading the eyes, and a white heron feather slanted in the band, brought the head into negligent harmony with the rest of the costume. The throat and left arm were bare, the latter from halfway above the elbow.

This was the monk's first view of a Byzantine gentleman of the period abroad in full dress to dazzle such of the gentler sex as he might chance to meet.

If Sergius' anticipation had been fulfilled; if, in place of the elegant, rakish–looking chevalier in florid garb, he had been confronted by an individual awry in body or hideous in feature, he would not have been confused, or stood repeating to himself, "My God, can this be a son of the Hegumen?"

That one so holy could have offspring so vicious stupefied him. The young man's sins would find him out—thus it was written—and then, what humiliation, what shame, what misery for the poor father!

Speeding his sympathy thus in advance, Sergius waited until the foremost of the sedan carriers gave him the customary cry of warning. As he stepped aside, two things occurred. The occupant of the box lifted her veil and held out a hand to him. He had barely time to observe the gesture and the countenance more childlike because of the distress it was showing, when the negro appeared on the left side of the carriage. Staying a moment to swing the javelin with which he was armed across the top of the buckler at his back, he leaped forward with the cry of an animal, and caught the gallant, one hand at the shoulder, the other at the knee. The cry and the seizure were parts of the same act. Resistance had been useless had there been no surprise. The Greek had the briefest instant to see the assailant—an instant to look up into the face blacker of the transport of rage back of it, and to cry for help. The mighty hands raised him bodily, and bore him swiftly toward the sea–front of the wall.

There were spectators near by; amongst them some men; but they were held fast by terror. No one moved but Sergius. Having seen the provocation, he alone comprehended the punishment intended.

The few steps to the wall were taken almost on the run. There, in keeping with his savage nature, the negro wished to see his victim fall, but a puff of wind blew the red cloak over his eyes, and he stopped to shake it aside. The Greek in the interval seeing the jagged rocks below, and the waves rolling in and churning themselves into foam, caught at his enemy's head, and the teeth of the gold–gilt iron crown cut his palms, bringing the blood. He writhed, and into Nilo's ears—pitiless if they had not been dead—poured screams for mercy. Then Sergius reached out, and caught him.

Nilo made no resistance. When he could free his eyes from the cloak he looked at the rescuer, who, unaware of his infirmity, was imploring him:

"As thou lovest God, and hopest mercy for thyself, do no murder!"

Now, if not so powerful as Nilo, Sergius was quite as tall; and while they stood looking at each other, their faces a little apart, the contrast between them was many sided. And one might have seen the ferocity of the black visage change first with pleased wonder; then brighten with recognition.

The Byzantine gained his feet quickly, and in his turn taken with a murderous impulse, drew his sword. Nilo, however, was quickest; the point of his javelin was magically promotive of Sergius' renewed efforts to terminate the affair. A great many persons were now present. To bring a multitude in hot assemblage, strife is generally more potential than peace, assume what voice the latter may. These rallied to Sergius' assistance; one brought the defeated youth his hat, fallen in the struggle; others helped him rearrange his dress; and congratulating him that he was alive, they took him in their midst, and carried him away. To have drawn upon such a giant! What a brave spirit the lad must possess!

It pleased Sergius to think he had saved the Byzantine. His next duty was to go to the relief of the little Princess. A dull fancy would have taught how trying the situation must have been to her; but with him the case was of a quick understanding quickened by solicitude. Taking Nilo with him, he made haste to the sedan.

If we pause here, venturing on the briefest break in the narrative, it is for the reader's sake exclusively. He will be sure to see how fair the conditions are for a romantic passage between Lael and Sergius, and we fear lest he

fly his imagination too high. It is true the period was still roseate with knighterrantry; men wore armor, and did battle behind shields; women were objects of devotion; conversation between lovers was in the style of high–flown courtesy, chary on one side, energized on the other by calls on the Saints to witness vows and declarations which no Saint, however dubious his reputation, could have listened to, much less excused; yet it were not well to overlook one or two qualifications. The usages referred to were by no means prevalent amongst Christians in the East; in Constantinople they had no footing at all. The two Comneni, Isaac and Alexis, approached more nearly the Western ideal of Chivalry than any of the Byzantine warriors; if not the only genuine Knights of Byzantium, they were certainly the last of them; yet even they stood aghast at the fantastic manners of the Frankish armigerents who camped before their gates en route to the Holy Land. As a consequence, the language of ordinary address and intercourse amongst natives in the Orient was simple and less discolored by what may be called pious profanity. Their discourse was often dull and prolix, but never a composite of sacrilege and exaggeration. Only in their writings were they pedantic. From this the reader can anticipate somewhat of the meeting between Sergius and Lael. It is to be borne in mind additionally that they were both young; she a child in years; he a child in lack of worldly experience. Children cannot be other than natural.

Approaching the sedan anxiously, he found the occupant pale and faint. Nilo being close at his side, she saw them both in the same glance, and reached her hand impulsively through the window. It was a question to which the member was offered. Sergius hesitated. Then she brought her face up unveiled.

"I know you, I know you," she said, to Sergius. "Oh, I am so glad you are come! I was so scared—so scared—I will never go from home again. You will stay with me—say you will—it will be so kind of you… I did not want Nilo to kill the man. I only wanted him driven off and made let me alone. He has followed and persecuted me day after day, often as I came out. I could not set foot in the street without his appearing. My father would have me bring Nilo along. He did not kill him, did he?"

The hand remained held out during the speech, as if asking to be taken. Meanwhile the words flowed like a torrent. The eyes were full of beseechment, and irresistibly lovely. If her speech was innocent, so was her appearance; and just as innocently, he took the hand, and held it while answering:

"He was not hurt. Friends have taken him away. Do not be afraid."

"You saved him. I saw you—my heart was standing still in my throat. Oh, I am glad he is safe! I am no longer afraid. My father will be grateful; and he is generous—he loves me nearly as much as I love him. I will go home now. Is not that best for me?"

Sergius had grown the tall man he was without having been so entreated—nay, without an adventure in the least akin to this. The hand lay in his folded lightly. He remembered once a dove flew into his cell. The window was so small it no doubt suggested to the poor creature a door to a nesting place. He remembered how he thought it a messenger from the Heaven which he never gave over thinking of and longing for, and he wanted to keep it, for afterwhile he was sure it would find a way to tell him wherewith it was charged. And he took the gentle stray in his hand, and nursed it with exceeding tenderness. There are times when it seems such a blessing that memories lie shallow and easy to stir; and now he recalled how the winged nuncio felt like the hand he was holding—it was almost as soft, and had the same magnetism of life—ay, and the same scarce perceptible tremble. To be sure it was merely for the bird's sake he kept hold of the hand, while he answered:

"Yes, I think it best, and I will go with you to your father's door."

To the carriers he said: "You will quit the wall at the grand stairs. The Princess wishes to be taken home."

The sensation of manliness incident to caring for the weak was refreshingly delightful. While the chair was passing he took place at the window. The fingers of the little hand still rested on the silken lining, like pinkish pearls. He beheld them longingly, but a restraint fell upon him. The pinkish pearls became sacred. He would have had them covered from the dust which the whisking breezes now blew up. The breezes were

insolent. The sun, sinking in gold over the Marmora, ought to temper the rays it let fall on them. Long as the orb had shone, how curious that it never acquired art enough to know the things which too much of its splendor might spoil. Then too he desired to speak with Lael—to ask if she was any longer afraid—he could not. Where had his courage gone? When he caught the young Greek from Nilo, the shortest while ago, he was wholly unconscious of timidity. The change was wonderful. Nor was the awkwardness beginning to hamper his hands and feet less incomprehensible. And why the embarrassment when people paused to observe him?

Thus the party pursued on until the descent from the wall; he on the right side of the chair, and Nilo on the left. Down in the garden where they were following a walk across the terrace toward Sta. Sophia, Lael put her face to the window, and spoke to him. His eagerness lest a word were lost was remarkable. He did not mind the stooping—and from his height that was a great deal—nor care much if it subjected him to remark.

"Have you seen the Princess lately—she who lives at Therapia?" Lael asked.

"Oh, yes," he answered. "She is my little mother. I go up there often. She advises me in everything."

"It must be sweet to have such a mother," Lael said, with a smile.

"It is sweet," he returned.

"And how lovely she is, and brave and assuring," Lael added. "Why, I forgot when with her to be afraid. I forgot we were in the hands of those dreadful Turks. I kept thinking of her, and not of myself."

Sergius waited for what more she had to say.

"This afternoon a messenger came from her to my father, asking him to let me visit her."

The heart of the monk gave a jump of pleasure.

"And you will go?"

A little older and wiser, and she would have detected a certain urgency there was in the tone with which he directed the inquiry.

"I cannot say yet. I have not seen my father since the invitation was received; he has been with the Emperor; but I know how greatly he admires the Princess. I think he will consent; if so, I will go up to Therapia to–morrow."

Sergius, silently resolving to betake himself thither early next morning, replied with enthusiasm: "Have you seen the garden behind her palace?"

"No."

"Well, of course I do not know what Paradise is, but if it be according to my fancy, I should believe that garden is a piece of it."

"Oh, I know I shall be pleased with the Princess, her garden—with everything hers."

Thereupon Lael settled back in her chair, and nothing more was said till the sedan halted in front of the Prince's door. Appearing at the window there, she extended a hand to her escort. The pinkish pearls did not seem so far away as before, and they were now offered directly. He could not resist taking them.

"I want you to know how very, very grateful I am to you," she said, allowing the hand to stay in his. "My father will speak to you about the day's adventure. He will make the opportunity and early.—But—but"—

She hesitated, and a blush overspread her face.

"But what?" he said, encouragingly.

"I do not know your name, or where you reside."

"Sergius is my name."

"Sergius?"

"Yes. And being a monk, I have a cell in the Monastery of St. James of Manganese. I belong to that Brotherhood, and humbly pray God to keep me in good standing. Now having told you who I am, may I ask"—

He failed to finish the sentence. Happily she divined his wish.

"Oh," she said, "I am called Gul–Bahar by those who love me dearest, though my real name is Lael."

"By which am I to call you?"

"Good–by," she continued, passing his question, and the look of doubt which accompanied it. "Good–by—the Princess will send for me to–morrow."

When the chair was borne into the house, it seemed to Sergius the sun had rushed suddenly down, leaving a twilight over the sky. He turned homeward with more worldly matter to think of than ever before. For the first time in his life the cloister whither he was wending seemed lonesome and uncomfortable. He was accustomed to imagine it lighted and warmed by a presence out of Heaven—that presence was in danger of supersession. Occasionally, however, the girlish Princess whom he was thus taking home with him gave place to wonder if the Greek he had saved from Nilo could be a son of the saintly Hegumen; and the reflection often as it returned brought a misgiving with it; for he saw to what intrigues he might be subjected, if the claim were true, and the claimant malicious in disposition. When at last he fell asleep on his pillow of straw the vision which tarried with him was of walking with Gul–Bahar in the garden behind the Homeric palace at Therapia, and it was exceedingly pleasant.

CHAPTER VII

A BYZANTINE HERETIC

While the venerable Chapel on the way up the heights of Blacherne was surrounded by the host of kneeling monastics, and the murmur of their prayers swept it round about like the sound of moaning breezes, a messenger found the Hegumen of the St. James' with the compliments of the Basileus, and a request that he come forward to a place in front of the door of the holy house. The good man obeyed; so the night long, maugre his age and infirmities, he stayed there stooped and bent, invoking blessings upon the Emperor and Empire; for he loved them both; and by his side Sergius lingered dutifully torch in hand. Twelve hours before he had engaged in the service worshipfully as his superior, nor would his thoughts have once flown from the Mystery enacting; but now—alas, for the inconstancy of youth!—now there were intervals when his mind wandered. The round white face of the Princess came again and again looking at him plainly as when in the window of the sedan on the promenade between the Bucoleon and the sea. He tried to shut it out; but often as he opened the book of prayers which he carried in common with his brethren, trying to read them away; often as he shook the torch thinking to hide them in the resinous smoke, the pretty, melting, importunate eyes reappeared, their fascination renewed and unavoidable. They seemed actually to take his efforts to get away for encouragement to return. Never on any holy occasion had he been so negligent—never had negligence on his part been so obstinate and nearly like sin.

Fortunately the night came to an end. A timid thing when first it peeped over the hills of Scutari, the day emboldened, and at length filled the East, and left of the torches alive on the opposing face of Blacherne only the sticks, the cups, and the streaming smoke. Then the great host stirred, arose, and in a time incredibly brief, silently gave itself back to the city;

while the Basileus issued from his solitary vigils in the Chapel, and, in a chastened spirit doubtless, sought his couch in one of the gilded interiors up somewhere under the Tower of Isaac.

The Hegumen of the St. James', overcome by the unwonted draughts upon his scanty store of strength, not to mention the exhaustion of spirit he had undergone, was carried home in a chair. Sergius was faithful throughout. At the gate of the monastery he asked the elder's blessing.

"Depart not, my son; stay with me a little longer. Thy presence is comforting to me."

The adjuration prevailed. Truth was, Sergius wished to set out for Therapia; but banishing the face of the little Princess once more, he helped the holy man out of the chair, through the dark–stained gate, down along the passages, to his apartment, bare and penitential as that of the humblest neophyte of the Brotherhood. Having divested the superior of his robes, and, gently as he could, assisted him to lay his spent body on the narrow cot serving for couch, he then received the blessing.

"Thou art a good son, Sergius," the Hegumen said, with some cheer. "Thou dost strengthen me. I feel thou art wholly given up to the Master and His religion—nay, so dost thou look like the Master that when thou art by I fancy it is He caring for me. Thou art at liberty now. I give thee the blessing."

Sergius knelt, received the trembling hands on his bowed head, and kissed them with undissembled veneration.

"Father," he said, "I beg permission to be gone a few days."

"Whither?"

"Thou knowest I regard the Princess Irene as my little mother. I wish to go and see her."

"At Therapia?"

"Yes, Father."

The Hegumen averted his eyes, and by the twitching of the fingers clasped upon his breast exposed a trouble at work in the depths of his mind.

"My son," he at length said, "I knew the father of the Princess Irene, and was his sympathizer. I led the whole Brotherhood in the final demand for his liberation from prison. When he was delivered, I rejoiced with a satisfied soul, and took credit for a large part of the good done him and his. It is not to magnify myself, or unduly publish my influence that the occurrence is recalled, but to show you how unnatural it would be were I unfriendly to his only child. So if now I say anything in the least doubtful of her, set it down to conscience, and a sense of duty to you whom I have received into the fraternity as one sent me specially by God… The life the Princess leads and her manners are outside the sanctions of society. There is no positive wrong in a woman of her degree going about in public places unveiled, and it must be admitted she does it most modestly; yet the example is pernicious in its effect upon women who are without the high qualities which distinguish her; at the same time the habit, even as she illustrates it, wears an appearance of defiant boldness, making her a subject of indelicate remark—making her, in brief, a topic for discussion. The objection, I grant, is light, being at worst an offence against taste and custom; much more serious is her persistence in keeping up the establishment at Therapia. A husband might furnish her an excuse; but the Turk is too near a neighbor—or rather she, a single woman widely renowned for beauty, is too tempting to the brutalized unbelievers infesting the other shore of the Bosphorus. Feminine timidity is always becoming; especially is it so when honor is more concerned than life or liberty. Unmarried and unprotected, her place is in a holy house on the Islands, or here in the city, where, aside from personal safety, she can have the benefit of holy offices. Now rumor is free to accuse her of this and that, which charity in multitude and without stint is an insufficient mantle to save her from. They say she prefers guilty freedom to marriage; but no one, himself of account, believes it—the constitution of her household forbids the taint. They say she avails herself of seclusion to indulge uncanonized worship. In plain terms, my son, it is said she is a heretic."

Sergius started and threw up his hands. Not that he was surprised at the charge, for the Princess herself had repeatedly admitted it was in the air against her; but coming from the venerated chief of his Brotherhood, the

statement, though a hearsay, sounded so dreadfully he was altogether unprepared for it. Knowing the consequences of heresy, he was also alarmed for her, and came near betraying himself. How interesting it would be to learn precisely and from the excellent authority before him, in what the heresy of the Princess consisted. If there was criminality in her faith, what was to be said of his own?

"Father," he remarked, calmly as possible, "I mind not the other sayings, the reports which go to the Princess' honor—they are the tarnishments which malice is always blowing on things white because they are white—but if it be not too trying to your strength, tell me more. Wherein is she a heretic?"

Again, the gaunt fingers of the Hegumen worked nervously, while his eyes averted themselves.

"How can I satisfy your laudable question, my son, and be brief?" and with the words he brought his look back, resting it on the young man's face. "Give attention, however, and I will try… I take it you know the Creed is the test of orthodoxy, and"—he paused and searched the eyes above his wistfully—"and that it has your unfaltering belief. You know its history, I am sure—at least you know it had issue from the Council of Nicaea over which Constantine, the greatest of ail Emperors, condescended to preside in person. Never was proceeding more perfect; its perfection proved the Divine Mind in its composition; yet, sad to say, the centuries since the august Council have been fruitful of disputes more or less related to those blessed canons, and sadder still, some of the disputes continue to this day. Would to God there was no more to be said of them!"

The good man covered his face with his hands, like one who would shut out a disagreeable sight. "But it is well to inform you, my son, of the questions whose agitation has at last brought the Church down till only Heaven can save it from rupture and ruin. Oh, that I should live to make the acknowledgment—I who in my youth thought it founded on a rock eternal as Nature itself!… A plain presentation of the subject in contention may help you to a more lively understanding of the gravity and untimeliness of the Princess' departure… First, let me ask if you know our

parties by name. Verily I came near calling them *factions*, and that I would not willingly, since it is an opprobrious term, resort to which would be denunciatory of myself—I being one of them."

"I have heard of a Roman party and of a Greek party; but further, I am so recently come to Constantinople, it would be safer did I take information of you."

"A prudent answer, by our most excellent and holy patron!" exclaimed the Hegumen, his countenance relaxing into the semblance of a smile. "Be always as wise, and the St. James' will bless themselves that thou wert brought to us… Attend now. The parties are Greek and Roman; though most frequently its enemies speak of the latter as *azymites*, which you will understand is but a nickname. I am a Romanist; the Brotherhood is all Roman; and we mind not when Scholarius, and his arch–supporter, Duke Notaras, howl *azymite* at us. A disputant never takes to contemptuous speeches except when he is worsted in the argument."

The moderation of the Hegumen had been thus far singularly becoming and impressive; now a fierce light gleamed in his eyes, and he cried, with a spasmodic clutch of the hands: "We are not of the forsworn! The curse of the perjured is not on our souls!"

The intensity of his superior astonished Sergius; yet he was shrewd enough to see and appreciate the disclosures of the outburst; and from that moment he was possessed of a feeling that the quarrel between the parties was hopelessly past settlement. If the man before him, worn with years, and actually laboring for the breath of life, could be so moved by contempt for the enemy, what of his co–partisans? Age is ordinarily a tamer of the passions. Here was an instance in which much contention long continued had counteracted the benign effect. As a teacher and example, how unlike this Hegumen was to Hilarion. The young man's heart warmed with a sudden yearning for the exile of the dear old Lavra whose unfailing sweetness of soul could keep the frigid wilderness upon the White Lake in summer purple the year round. Never did love of man for man look so lovely; never did it seem so comprehensive and all sufficient! The nearest passion opposition could excite in that pure and chastened nature was pity.

But here! Quick as the reflection came, it was shut out. There was more to be learned. God help the heretic in the hands of this judge at this time! And with the mental exclamation Sergius waited, his interest in the definition of heresy sharpened by personal concern.

"There are five questions dividing the two parties," the Hegumen continued, when the paroxysm of hate was passed. "Listen and I will give them to you in naked form, trusting time for an opportunity to deal with them at large… First then the Procession of the Holy Ghost. That is, does the Holy Ghost proceed from the Son, or from the Father and the Son? The Greeks say from the Son; the Romans say the Father and the Son being One, the Procession must needs be from both of them conjunctively… Next the Nicene Creed, as originally published, did undoubtedly make the Holy Ghost proceed from the Father alone. The intent was to defend the unity of the Godhead. Subsequently the Latins, designing to cast the assertion of the identity of the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son in a form which they thought more explicit, planted in the body of the Creed the word *filioque*, meaning *from the Son.* This the Greeks declare an unwarranted addition. The Latins, on their part, deny it an addition in any proper sense; they say it is but an explanation of the principle proclaimed, and in justification trace the usage from the Fathers, Greek and Latin, and from Councils subsequent to the Nicene… When we consider to what depths of wrangle the two themes have carried the children of God who should be brethren united in love, knowing rivalry only in zeal for the welfare of the Church, that other subjects should creep in to help widen the already dangerous breach has an appearance like a judgment of God; yet it would be dealing unfairly with you, my son, to deny the pendency of three others in particular. Of these we have first, Shall the bread in the Eucharist be leavened or unleavened? About six hundred years ago the Latins began the use of unleavened bread. The Greeks protested against the innovation, and through the centuries arguments have been bandied to and fro in good–natured freedom; but lately, within fifty years, the debate has degenerated into quarrel, and now—ah, in what terms suitable to a God–fearing servant can I speak of the temper signalizing the discussion now? Let it pass, let it pass!… We have next a schism respecting Purgatory. The Greeks deny the

existence of such a state, saying there are but two places awaiting the soul after death—Heaven and Hell."

Again the Hegumen paused, arrested, as it were, by a return of vindictive passion.

"Oh, the schismatics!" he exclaimed. "Not to see in the Latin idea of a third place a mercy of God unto them especially! If only the righteous are admitted to the All Holy Father immediately upon the final separation of body and spirit; if there is no intermediate state for the purgation of such of the baptized as die sodden in their sins, what shall become of them?"

Sergius shuddered, but held his peace.

"Yet another point," the superior continued, ere the ruffle in his voice subsided—"another of which the wranglers have made the most; for as you know, my son, the Greeks, thinking themselves teachers of all things intellectual, philosophy, science, poetry, art, and especially religion, and that at a period when the Latins were in the nakedness of barbarism, are filled with pride, like empty bottles with air; and because in the light of history their pride is not unreasonable, they drop the more readily into the designs of the conspirators against the Unity of the Church—I speak now of the Primacy. As if power and final judgment were things for distribution amongst a number of equals! As if one body were better of a hundred heads! Who does not know that two wills equally authorized mean the absence of all will! Of the foundations of God Chaos alone is unorganized; and to such likeness Scholarius would reduce Christendom! God forbid! Say so, my son—let me hear you repeat it after me—God forbid:"

With an unction scarcely less fervid than his chief's, Sergius echoed the exclamation; whereupon the elder looked at him, and said, with a flush on his face, "I fear I have given rein too freely to disgust and abhorrence. Passion is never becoming in old men. Lest you misjudge me, my son, I shall take one further step in explanation; it will be for you to then justify or condemn the feeling you have witnessed in me. A deeper wound to conscience, a grosser provocation to the divine vengeance, a perfidy more impious and inexcusable you shall never overtake in this life, though you walk in it thrice the years of Noah… There have been repeated attempts to

settle the doctrinal differences to which I have referred. A little more than a hundred years ago—it was in the reign of Andronicus III.—one Barlaam, a Hegumen, like myself, was sent to Italy by the Emperor with a proposal of union; but Benedict the Pope resolutely refused to entertain the proposition, for the reason that it did not contemplate a final arrangement of the question at issue between the Churches. Was he not right?"

Sergius assented.

"In 1369, John V. Palaeologus, under heavy pressure of the Turks, renewed overtures of reconciliation, and to effectuate his purpose, he even became a Catholic. Then John VI., the late Emperor, more necessitous than his predecessor, submitted such a presentation to the Papal court that Nicolos of Cusa was despatched to Constantinople to study and report upon the possibilities of a doctrinal settlement and union. In November, 1437, the Emperor, accompanied by Joseph, the Patriarch, Besserion, Archbishop of Nicaea, and deputies empowered to represent the other Patriarchs, together with a train of learned assistants and secretaries, seven hundred in all, set out for Italy in response to the invitation of Eugenius IV, the Pope. Landing at Venice, the Basileus was escorted to Ferrara, where Eugenius received him with suitable pomp. The Council of Basle, having been adjourned to Ferrara for the better accommodation of the imperial guest, was opened there in April, 1438. But the plague broke out, and the sessions were transferred to Florence where the Council sat for three years. Dost thou follow me, my son?"

"With all my mind, Father, and thankful for thy painstaking."

"Nay, good Sergius, thy attention more than repays me… Observe now the essentials of all the dogmatic questions I named to you as to–day serving the conspiracy against the Unity of our beloved Church were settled and accepted at the Council of Florence. The primacy of the Roman Bishop was the last to be disposed of, because distinguishable from the other differences by a certain political permeation; finally it too was reconciled in these words—bear them in memory, I pray, that you may comprehend their full import—'The Holy Apostolic See and Roman Pontiff hold the Primacy over all the world; the Roman Pontiff is the

successor of Peter, Prince of Apostles, and he is the true Vicar of Christ, the head of the whole Church, the Father and Teacher of all Christians.'**[24]** In Italy, 1439—mark you, son Sergius, but a trifle over eleven years ago—the members of the Council from the East and West, the Greeks with the Latins—Emperor, Patriarchs, Metropolitans, Deacons, and lesser dignitaries of whatever title—signed a Decree of Union which we call the *Hepnoticon*, and into which the above acceptances had been incorporated. I said all signed the decree—there were two who did not, Mark of Ephesus and the Bishop Stauropolis. The Patriarch of Constantinople, Joseph, died during the Council; yet the signatures of his colleagues collectively and of the Emperor perfected the Decree as to Constantinople. What sayest thou, my son? As a student of holy canons, what sayest thou?"

"I am but a student," Sergius replied; "still to my imperfect perception the Unity of the Church was certainly accomplished."

"In law, yes," said the Hegumen, with difficulty rising to a sitting posture—"yes, but it remained to make the accomplishment binding on the consciences of the signatories. Hear now what was done. A form of oath was draughted invoking the most awful maledictions on the parties who should violate the decree, and it was sworn to."

"Sworn to?"

"Ay, son Sergius—sworn to by each and all of those attendant upon the Council—from Basileus down to the humblest catechumen inclusive, they took the oath, and by the taking bound their consciences under penalty of the eternal wrath of God. I spoke of certain ones forsworn, did I not?"

Sergius bowed.

"And worse—I spoke of some whose souls were enduring the curse of the perjured. That was extreme—it was passion—I saw thee shudder at it, and I did not blame thee. Hear me now, and thou wilt not blame me… They came home, the Basileus and his seven hundred followers. Scarcely were they disembarked before they were called to account. The city, assembled on the quay, demanded of them: 'What have you done with us? What of our Faith? Have you brought us the victory?' The Emperor hurried

to his palace; the prelates hung their heads, and trembling and in fear answered: 'We have sold our Faith—we have betrayed the pure sacrifice—we have become Azymites.'[25] Thus spake Bessarion; thus Balsamon, Archdeacon and Guardian of the Archives; thus Gemiste of Lacedaemon; thus Antoine of Heraclius; thus spake they all, the high and the low alike, even George Scholarius, whom thou didst see marching last night first penitent of the Vigils. 'Why did you sign the Decree?' And they answered, 'We were afraid of the Franks.' Perjury to impiety—cowardice to perjury!… And now, son Sergius, it is said—all said—with one exception. Some of the Metropolitans, when they were summoned to sign the Decree, demurred, 'Without you pay us to our satisfaction we shall not sign.' The silver was counted down to them. Nay, son, look not so incredulous—I was there—I speak of what I saw. What could be expected other than that the venals would repudiate everything? And so they did, all save Metrophanes, the Syncelle, and Gregory, by grace of God the present Patriarch. If I speak with heat, dost thou blame me? If I called the recusants forsworn and perjured, thinkest thou the pure in Heaven charged my soul with a sin? Answer as thou lovest the right?"

"My Father," Sergius replied, "the denunciation of impiety cannot be sinful, else I have to unlearn all I have ever been taught; and being the chief Shepherd of an honorable Brotherhood, is it not thy duty to cry out at every appearance of wrong? That His Serenity, the Patriarch, receives thy acquittal and is notably an exception to a recusancy so universal, is comforting to me; to have to cast him out of my admiration would be grievous. But pardon me, if from fear thou wilt overlook it, I again ask thee to speak further of the heresy of the Princess Irene."

Sergius, besides standing with his back to the door of the cell, was listening to the Hegumen with an absorption of sense so entire that he was unaware of the quiet entrance of a third party, who halted after a step or two but within easy hearing.

"The request is timely—most timely," the Hegumen replied, without regarding the presence of the newcomer. "I had indeed almost forgotten the Princess… With controversies such as I have recounted raging in the

Church, like wolves in a sheepfold, comes one with new doctrines to increase the bewilderment of the flock, how is he to be met? This is what the Princess has done, and is doing."

"Still, Father, you leave me in the dark."

The Hegumen faltered, but finally said: "Apart from her religious views and novel habits, the Princess Irene is the noblest nature in Byzantium. Were we overtaken by some great calamity, I should look for her to rise by personal sacrifice into heroism. In acknowledgment of my fatherly interest in her, she has often entertained me at her palace, and spoken her mind with fearless freedom, leaving me to think her pursued by presentiments of a fatality which is to try her with terrible demands, and that she is already prepared to submit to them."

"Yes," said Sergius, with an emphatic gesture, "there are who live martyrs all their days, reserving nothing for death but to bring them their crowns."

The manner of the utterance, and the thought compelled the Hegumen's notice.

"My son," he said, presently, "thou hast a preacher's power. I wish I foreknew thy future. But I must haste or"—

"Nay, Father, permit me to help you recline again."

And with the words, Sergius helped the feeble body down.

"Thanks, my son," he received, in return, "I know thy soul is gentle."

After a rest the speech was resumed.

"Of the Princess—she is given to the Scriptures; in the reading, which else would be a praiseworthy usage, she refuses light except it proceed from her own understanding. We are accustomed when in doubt—thou knowest it to be so—to take the interpretations of the Fathers; but she insists the Son of God knew what He meant better than any whose good intentions are lacking in the inspirations of the Holy Ghost."

A gleam of pleasure flitted over the listener's countenance.

"So," the Hegumen continued, "she hath gone the length of fabricating a creed for herself, and substituting it for that which is the foundation of the

Church—I mean the Creed transmitted to us from the Council of Nicaea."

"Is the substitute in writing, Father?"

"I have read it."

"Then thou canst tell me whence she drew it."

"From the Gospels word and word… There now—I am too weak to enter into discussion—I can only allude to effects."

"Forgive another request"—Sergius spoke hastily—"Have I thy permission, to look at what she hath written?"

"Thou mayst try her with a request; but remember, my son"—the Hegumen accompanied the warning with a menacious glance—"remember proselyting is the tangible overt act in heresy which the Church cannot overlook… To proceed. The Princess' doctrines are damnatory of the Nicene; if allowed, they would convert the Church into a stumbling–block in the way of salvation. They cannot be tolerated… I can no more—the night was too much for me. Go, I pray, and order wine and food. To–morrow—or when thou comest again—and delay not, for I love thee greatly—we will return to the subject."

Sergius saw the dew gathering on the Hegumen's pallid forehead, and observed his failing voice. He stooped, took the wan hand from the laboring breast, and kissed it; then turning about quickly to go for the needed restoration, he found himself face to face with the young Greek whom he rescued from Nilo in the encounter on the wall.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ACADEMY OF EPICURUS

"I would have a word with you," the Greek said, in a low tone, as Sergius was proceeding to the door.

"But thy father is suffering, and I must make haste."

"I will accompany thee."

Sergius stopped while the young man went to the cot, removed his hat and knelt, saying, "Thy blessing, father."

The Hegumen laid a hand on the petitioner's head.

"My son, I have not seen thee for many days," he said; "yet in hope that thou hast heard me, and abandoned the associates who have been endangering thy soul and my good name, and because I love thee—God knows how well—and remember thy mother, who lived illustrating every beatitude, and died in grace, praying for thee, take thou my blessing."

With tears starting in his own eyes, Sergius doubted not the effect of the reproof upon the son; and he pitied him, and even regretted remaining to witness the outburst of penitence and grief he imagined forthcoming. The object of his sympathy took down the hand, kissed it in a matter–of–fact way, arose, and said, carelessly: "This lamentation should cease. Why can I not get you to understand, father, that there is a new Byzantium? That even in the Hippodrome nothing is as it used to be except the colors? How often have I explained to you the latest social discovery admitted now by everybody outside the religious orders, and by many within them—I mean the curative element in sin."

"Curative element in sin!" exclaimed the father.

"Ay—Pleasure."

"O God!" sighed the old man, turning his face hopelessly to the wall, "Whither are we drifting?"

He hardly heard the prodigal's farewell.

"If you wish to speak with me, stay here until I return."

This Sergius said when the two passed out of the cell. Going down the darkened passage, he glanced behind him, and saw the Greek outside the door; and when he came back with the Hegumen's breakfast, and reentered the apartment, he brushed by him still on the outside. At the cot, Sergius offered the refreshment on his knees, and in that posture waited while his superior partook of it; for he discerned how the aged heart was doubly stricken—once for the Church, deserted by so many of its children, and again for himself, forsaken by his own son.

"What happiness to me, O Sergius, wert thou of my flesh and blood!"

The expression covered every feeling evoked by the situation. Afterwhile another of the Brotherhood appeared, permitting Sergius to retire.

"I am ready to hear you now," he said, to the Greek at the door.

"Let us to your cell then."

In the cell, Sergius drew forth the one stool permitted him by the rules of the Brotherhood.

"Be seated," he said.

"No," the visitor returned, "I shall be brief. You do not know my father. The St. James' should relieve him of active duty. His years are sadly enfeebling him."

"But that would he ungrateful in them."

"Heaven knows," the prodigal continued, complainingly, "how I have labored to bring him up abreast of the time; he lives entirely in the past. But pardon me; if I heard aright, my father called you Sergius."

"That is my monastic name."

"You are not a Greek?"

"The Great Prince is my political sovereign."

"Well, I am Demedes. My father christened me Metrophanes, after the late Patriarch; but it did not please me, and I have entitled myself. And

now we know each other, let us be friends."

Sergius' veil had fallen over his face, and while replacing it under the hat, he replied, "I shall strive, Demedes, to love you as I love myself."

The Greek, it should be remembered, was good featured, and of a pleasant manner; so much so, indeed, as to partially recompense him for his failure in stature; wherefore the overture was by no means repulsive.

"You may wonder at my plucking you from my father's side; you may wonder still more at my presumption in seeking to attach myself to you; but I think my reasons good… In the first place, it is my duty to acknowledge that but for your interference yesterday the gigantic energumen by whom I was unexpectedly beset would have slain me. In fact, I had given myself up for lost. The rocks at the foot of the wall seemed springing out of the water to catch me, and break every bone in my body. You will accept my thanks, will you not?"

"The saving two fellow beings, one from murder, the other from being murdered, is not, in my opinion, an act for thanks; still, to ease you of a sense of obligation, I consent to the acknowledgment."

"It does relieve me," Demedes said, with a taking air; "and I am encouraged to go on."

He paused, and surveyed Sergius deliberately from head to foot, and the admiration he permitted to be seen, taken as a second to his continuing words, could not have been improved by a professed actor.

"Are not flesh and blood of the same significance in all of us? With youth and health superadded to a glorious physical structure, may we not always conclude a man rich in spirit and lusty impulses? Is it possible a gown and priestly hat can entirely suppress his human nature? I have heard of Anthony the Anchorite."

The idea excited his humor, and he laughed.

"I mean no irreverence," he resumed; "but you know, dear Sergius, it is with laughter as with tears, we cannot always control it… Anthony resolved to be a Saint, but was troubled by visions of beautiful women. To escape them, he followed some children of Islam into the desert. Alas! the

visions went with him. He burrowed then in a tomb—still the visions. He hid next in the cellar of an old castle—in vain—the visions found him out. He flagellated himself for eighty and nine years, every day and night of which was a battle with the visions. He left two sheepskins to as many bishops, and one haircloth shirt to two favorite disciples—they had been his armor against the visions. Finally, lest the seductive goblins should assail him in death, he bade the disciples lose him by burial in an unknown place. Sergius, my good friend"—here the Greek drew nearer, and laid a hand lightly on the monk's flowing sleeve—"I heard some of your replies to my father, and respect your genius too much to do more than ask why you should waste your youth"—

"Forbear! Go not further—no, not a word!" Sergius exclaimed. "Dost thou account the crown the Saint at last won nothing?"

Demedes did not seem in the least put out by the demonstration; possibly he expected it, and was satisfied with the hearing continued him.

"I yield to you," he said, with a smile, "and willingly since you convince me I was not mistaken in your perception… My father is a good man. His goodness, however, but serves to make him more sensitive to opposition. The divisions of the Church give him downright suffering. I have heard him go on about them hours at a time. Probably his proneness to lamentation should be endured with respectful patience; but there is a peculiarity in it—he is blind to everything save the loss of power and influence the schisms are fated to entail upon the Church. He fights valorously in season and out for the old orthodoxies, believing that with the lapse of religion as at present organized the respectability and dominion of the holy orders will also lapse. Nay, Sergius, to say it plainly, he and the Brotherhood are fast keying themselves up to a point in fanaticism when dissent appears blackest heresy. To you, a straightforward seeker after information, it has never occurred, I suspect, to inquire how far—or rather how close—beyond that attainment lie punishments of summary infliction and most terrible in kind? Torture—the stake—holocausts in the Hippodrome—spectacles in the Cynegion—what are they to the enthused Churchmen but righteous judgments mercifully executed

on wayward heretics? I tell you, monk—and as thou lovest her, heed me—I tell you the Princess Irene is in danger."

This was unexpected, and forcibly put; and thinking of the Princess, Sergius lost the calmness he had up to this time successfully kept.

"The Princess—tortured—God forbid!"

"Recollect," the Greek continued—"for you will reflect upon this—recollect I overheard the close of your interview with my father. To–morrow, or upon your return from Therapia, be it when it may, he will interrogate you with respect to whatever she may confide to you in the least relative to the Creed, which, as he states, she has prepared for herself. You stand warned. Consider also that now I have in part acquitted myself of the obligation I am under to you for my life."

The simple–mindedness of the monk, to whom the book of the world was just beginning to open, was an immense advantage to the Greek. It should not be surprising, therefore, if the former relaxed his air, and leaned a little forward to hear what was further submitted to him.

"Have you breakfasted?" the prodigal asked, in his easy manner.

"I have not."

"Ah! In concern for my father, you have neglected yourself. Well, I must not be inconsiderate. A hungry man is seldom a patient listener. Shall I break off now?"

"You have interested me, and I may be gone several days."

"Very well. I will make haste. It is but justice to the belligerents in the spiritual war to admit the zeal they have shown; Gregory the Patriarch, and his Latins, on the one side, and Scholarius and his Greeks on the other. They have occupied the pulpits alternately, each refusing presence to the other. They decline association in the Sacramental rites. In Sta. Sophia, it is the Papal mass to–day; to–morrow, it will be the Greek mass. It requires a sharp sense to detect the opposition in smell between the incense with which the parties respectively fumigate the altars of the ancient house. I suppose there is a difference. Yesterday the parabaloni came to blows over a body they were out burying, and in the struggle the bier was knocked

down, and the dead spilled out. The Greeks, being the most numerous, captured the labarum of the Latins, and washed it in the mud; yet the monogram on it was identical with that on their own. Still I suppose there was a difference."

Demedes laughed.

"But seriously, Sergius, there is much more of the world outside of the Church—or Churches, as you prefer—than on the inside. In the tearing each other to pieces, the militants have lost sight of the major part, and, as normally bound, it has engaged in thinking for itself. That is, the shepherd is asleep, the dogs are fighting, and the sheep, left to their individual conduct, are scattered in a hunt for fresher water and greener pasturage. Have you heard of the Academy of Epicurus?"

"No."

"I will tell you about it. But do you take the seat there. It is not within my purpose to exhaust you in this first conference."

"I am not tired."

"Well"—and the Greek smiled pleasantly—"I was regardful of myself somewhat in the suggestion. My neck is the worse of having to look up so constantly… The youth of Byzantium, you must know, are not complaining of neglect; far from it—they esteem it a great privilege to be permitted to think in freedom. Let me give you of their conclusions. There is no God, they say, since a self–respecting God would not tolerate the strife and babble carried on in his name to the discredit of his laws. Religion, if not a deceit, is but the tinkling of brazen cymbals. A priest is a professor eking out an allowance of fine clothes and bread and wine; with respect to the multitude, he is a belled donkey leading a string of submissive camels. Of what account are Creeds except to set fools by the ears? Which—not what—*which* is the true Christian Faith? The Patriarch tells us, 'Verily it is this,' and Scholarius replies, 'Verily the Patriarch is a liar and a traitor to God for his false teaching'—he then tells us it is that other thing just as unintelligible. Left thus to ourselves—I acknowledge myself one of the wandering flock—flung on our own resources—we resorted to counselling each other, and agreed that a substitute for religion

was a social necessity. Our first thought was to revive Paganism; worshipping many gods, we might peradventure stumble upon one really existent: whether good or bad ought not to trouble us, provided he took intelligent concern in the drift of things. To quarrel about his qualities would be a useless repetition of the folly of our elders—the folly of swimming awhile in a roaring swirl. Some one suggested how much easier and more satisfactory it is to believe in one God than in many; besides which Paganism is a fixed system intolerant of freedom. Who, it was argued, would voluntarily forego making his own gods? The privilege was too delightful. Then it was proposed that we resolve ourselves each into a God unto himself. The idea was plausible; it would at least put an end to wrangling, by giving us all an agreeable object to worship, while for mental demands and social purposes generally we could fall back on Philosophy. Had not our fathers tried Philosophy? When had society a better well being than in the halcyon ages of Plato and Pythagoras? Yet there was a term of indecision with us—or rather incubation. To what school should we attach ourselves? A copy of the Enchiridion of Epictetus fell into our hands, and after studying it faithfully, we rejected Stoicism. The Cynics were proposed; we rejected them—there was nothing admirable in Diogenes as a patron. We next passed upon Socratus. *Sons of Sophroniscus* had a lofty sound; still his system of moral philosophy was not acceptable, and as he believed in a creative God, his doctrine was too like a religion. Though the Delphian oracle pronounced him the wisest of mankind, we concluded to look further, and in so doing, came to Epicurus. There we stopped. His promulgations, we determined, had no application except to this life; and as they offered choice between the gratification of the senses and the practice of virtue, leaving us free to adopt either as a rule of conduct, we formally enrolled ourselves Epicureans. Then, for protection against the Church, we organized. The departure might send us to the stake, or to Tamerlane, King of the Cynegion, or, infinitely worse, to the cloisters, if we were few; but what if we took in the youths of Byzantium as an entirety? The policy was clear. We founded an Academy—the Academy of Epicurus—and lodged it handsomely in a temple; and three times every week we have a session and lectures. Our membership is

already up in the thousands, selected from the best blood of the Empire; for we do not confine our proselyting to the city."

Here Sergius lifted his hand. He had heard the prodigal in silence, and it had been difficult the while to say which dominated his feeling— disgust, amazement, or pity. He was scarcely in condition to think; yet he comprehended the despairing cry of the Hegumen, Oh, my God! whither are we drifting? The possibilities of the scheme flew about him darkly, like birds in a ghastly twilight. He had studied the oppositions to religion enough to appreciate the attractive power there was for youth in the pursuit of pleasure. He knew also something of the race Epicureanism had run in the old competitions of philosophy—that it had been embraced by more of the cultivated Pagan world than the other contemporary systems together. It had been amongst the last, if not in fact the very last, of the conquests of Christianity. But here it was again; nor that merely— here it was once more a subject of organized effort. Who was responsible for the resurrection? The Church? How wicked its divisions seemed to him! Bishop fighting Bishop—the clergy distracted—altars discredited—sacred ceremonies neglected—what did it all mean, if not an interregnum of the Word? Men cannot fight Satan and each other at the same time. With such self–collection as he could command, he asked: "What have you in substitution of God and Christ?"

"A Principle," was the reply.

"What Principle?"

"Pleasure, the Purpose of this Life, and its Pursuit, an ennobled occupation."

"Pleasure to one is not pleasure to another—it is of kinds."

"Well said, O Sergius! Our kind is gratification of the senses. Few of us think of the practice of virtue, which would be dreaming in the midst of action."

"And you make the pursuit an occupation?"

"In our regard the heroic qualities of human nature are patience, courage and judgment; hence our motto—Patience, Courage, Judgment. The

pursuit calls them all into exercise, ennobling the occupation."

The Greek was evidently serious. Sergius ran him over from the pointed shoes to the red feather in the conical red hat, and said in accents of pity:

"Oh, alas! Thou didst wrong in re–entitling thyself. Depravity had been better than Demedes."

The Greek lifted his brows, and shrugged his shoulders.

"In the Academy we are used to taking as well as giving," he said, wholly unembarrassed. "But, my dear Sergius, it remains for me to discharge an agreeable commission. Last night, in full session, I told of the affair on the wall. Could you have heard my description of your intervention, and the eulogium with which I accompanied it, you would not have accused me of ingratitude. The brethren were carried away; there was a tempest of applause; they voted you a hero; and, without a dissent, they directed me to inform you that the doors of the Academy were open"—

"Stop," said Sergius, with both hands up as if to avert a blow. After looking at the commissioner a moment, his eyes fiercely bright, he walked the floor of the cell twice.

"Demedes," he said, halting in front of the Greek, a reactionary pallor on his countenance, "the effort thou art making to get away from God proves how greatly He is a terror to thee. The Academy is only a multitude thou hast called together to help hide thee from Christ. Thou art an organizer of Sin—a disciple of Satan"—he was speaking not loud or threateningly, but with a force before which the other shrank visibly—"I cannot say I thank thee for the invitation on thy tongue unfinished, but I am better of not hearing it. Get thee behind me."

He turned abruptly, and started for the door.

The Greek sprang after him, and took hold of his gown.

"Sergius, dear Sergius," he said, "I did not intend to offend you. There is another thing I have to speak about. Stay!"

"Is it something different?" Sergius asked.

"Ay—as light and darkness are different."

"Be quick then."

Sergius was standing under the lintel of the door. Demedes slipped past him, and on the outside stopped.

"You are going to Therapia?" he asked.

"Yes."

"The Princess of India will be there. She has already set out."

"How knowest thou?"

"She is always under my eyes."

The mockery in the answer reminded Sergius of the Academy. The prodigal was designing to impress him with an illustration of the Principle it had adopted in lieu of God. The motto, he was having it thus early understood, was not an empty formula, but an inspiring symbol, like the Cross on the flag. This votary, the advertisement as much as said, was in pursuit of the little Princess—he had chosen her for his next offering to the Principle which, like another God, was insatiable of gifts, sacrifices, and honors. Such the thoughts of the monk.

"You know her?" Demedes asked.

"Yes."

"You believe her the daughter of the Prince of India?"

"Yes."

"Then you do not know her."

The Greek laughed insolently.

"The best of us, and the oldest can be at times as much obliged by information as by a present of bezants. The Academy sends you its compliments. The girl is the daughter of a booth–keeper in the bazaar—a Jew, who has no princely blood to spare a descendant—a dog of a Jew, who makes profit by lending his child to an impostor."

"Whence hadst thou this—this—"

The Greek paid no attention to the interruption.

"The Princess Irene gives a fete this afternoon. The fishermen of the Bosphorus will be there in a body. I will be there. A pleasant time to you,

and a quick awakening, O Sergius!"

Demedes proceeded up the passage, but turned about, and said: "Patience, Courage, Judgment. When thou art witness to all there is in the motto. O Sergius, it may be thou wilt be more placable. I shall see to it that the doors of the Academy are kept open for thee."

The monk stood awhile under the lintel bewildered; for the introduction to wickedness is always stunning—a circumstance proving goodness to be the natural order.

CHAPTER IX

A FISHERMAN'S FETE

The breakfast to which Sergius addressed himself was in strict observance of the Rules of the Brotherhood; and being plain, it was quickly despatched. Returning to his cell, he let his hair loose, and combed it with care; then rolling it into a glistening mass, he tucked it under his hat. Selecting a fresher veil next, he arranged that to fall down his back and over the left shoulder. He also swept the dark gown free of dust, and cleansing the crucifix and large black horn beads of his rosary, lingered a moment while contemplating the five sublime mysteries allotted to the third chaplet, beginning with the Resurrection of Christ and ending with the Coronation of the Blessed Virgin. In a calmness of spirit such as follows absolution, he finally sallied from the Monastery, and ere long arrived at the landing outside the Fish Market Gate on the Golden Horn. The detentions had been long; so for speed he selected a two–oared boat.

"To Therapia—by noon," he said to the rower, and, dropping into the passenger's box, surrendered himself to reflection.

The waterway by which the monk proceeded is not unfamiliar to the reader, a general idea of it having been given in the chapter devoted to the adventures of the Prince of India in his outing up the Bosphorus to the Sweet Waters of Asia. The impression there sought to be conveyed—how feebly is again regretfully admitted—was of a panorama remarkable as a composition of all the elements of scenic beauty blent together in incomparable perfection. Now, however, it failed the tribute customary from such as had happily to traverse it.

The restfulness of the swift going; the shrinking of the flood under the beating of the oars; the sky and the wooded heights, and the stretches of shore, town and palace lined; the tearing through the blue veil hanging over the retiring distances; the birds, the breezes, the ships hither coming

and yonder going, and the sparkles shooting up in myriad recurrence on the breaking waves—all these pleasures of the most delicate of the receiving senses were tyrannically forbidden him.

The box in which he sat half reclining was wide enough for another passenger side by side with him, and it seemed he imagined the vacant place occupied now by Demedes, and now by Lael, and that he was speaking to them; when to the former, it was with dislike, and a disposition to avoid the touch of his red cloak, though on the sleeve ever so lightly; when to the latter, his voice would lower, his eyes soften, and the angry spots on his brow and cheeks go out—not more completely could they have disappeared had she actually exorcised them with some of the sweet confessions lovers keep for emergencies, and a touch of finger besides.

"So," he would say, Demedes for the time on the seat, "thou deniest God, and hast a plot against Christ. Shameful in the son of a good father!… What is thy Academy but defiance of the Eternal Majesty? As well curse the Holy Ghost at once, for why should he who of preference seeketh a bed with the damned he disappointed? Or is thy audacity a blasphemous trial of the endurance of forgiveness?"… Exit Demedes, enter Lael… "The child—she is a child! By such proof as there is in innocence, and in the loveliness of blushing cheeks, and eyes which answer the Heavenly light they let in by light as Heavenly let out, she is a child! What does evil see in her to set it hungering after her? Or is there in virtue a signal to its enemies—Lo, here! A light to be blown out, lest it disperse our darkness!"… Reenter Demedes… "Abduct her!—How?—When? To that end is it thou keepest her always under eye? The Princess Irene gives a Fisherman's Fete—the child will be there—thou wilt be there. Is this the day of the attempt? Bravos as fishermen, to seize her—boats to carry her off—the Bosphorus wide and deep, and the hills beyond a hiding–place, and in the sky over them the awful name Turk. The crime and the opportunity hand in hand! Let them prosper now, and I who have from the cradle's side despatched my soul faith in hand to lay it at Heaven's gate may never again deny a merit in the invocation of Sin virtuous as prayer"… To Lael in the seat… "But be not afraid. I will be there also.

I"… A sudden fear fell upon him. If the abduction were indeed arranged for the afternoon, to what might he not be led by an open attempt to defeat it? Bloodshed—violence! He whose every dream had been of a life in which his fellow–men might find encouragement to endure their burdens, and of walking before them an example of love and forbearance, submissive and meek that he might with the more unanswerable grace preach obedience and fraternity to them—Merciful Heaven! And he shuddered and drew the veil hastily over his face, as if, in a bloody tumult, the ideal life, so the ultimate happiness, were vanishing before his eyes. Taking the confessions of such as have been greatly tried, few men, few even of those renowned for courage and fine achievement, ever pass their critical moments of decision unassailed by alternative suggestions due to fear. Sergius heard them now. "Return to thy cell, and to thy beads, and prayer," they seemed to say. "What canst thou, a stranger in a strange land, if once the Academy of which thou wert this morning informed, becomes thy enemy? Ay, return to thy cell! Who is she for whom thou art putting thyself in the way of temptation? The daughter of a booth–keeper in the bazaar—a Jew, who hath no princely blood to spare a descendant—a dog of a Jew, who maketh profit by lending his child to an impostor."

The suggestion was powerful. In the heat of the debate, however, an almost forgotten voice reached him, reciting one of the consolations of Father Hilarion: "Temptations are for all of us; nor shall any man be free of them. The most we can hope is to be delivered from them. What vanity to think we can travel threescore and ten years from our cradles, if so long we live, without an overture of some kind from the common enemy! On the other side, what a triumph to put his blandishments by! The Great Exemplar did not fly from Satan; he stayed, and overcame him."

"Be not afraid," Sergius said, as if to Lael, and firmly, like one resolved of fear and hesitation. "I will be there also."

Then looking about him, at his left hand he beheld the village of Emirghian, bent round a mountain's base, in places actually invading the water. In face of such a view a susceptible nature must needs be very sick of soul to go blindly on. The brightly painted houses cast tremulous

reflections to a vast depth in the limpid flood, and where they ceased, down immeasurably, the vivid green of the verdure on the mountain's breast suggested the beginning of the next of the seven Mohammedan earths. Above this borrowed glory he seemed afloat; and to help the impression, the sound of many voices singing joyously was borne to him. He waved his hand, and the rowers, resting from their labor, joined him in listening.

The little gulf of Stenia lies there landlocked, and out of it a boat appeared, skimming around the intervening promontory. In a mass of flowers, in a shade of garlands hanging from a low mast, its arms and shrouds wreathed with roses, the singers sat timing their song with their oars. The refrain was supported by zitheras, flutes and horns. The vessel turned northwardly when fairly out in the strait; and then another boat came round the point—and another—and another—and many others, all decorated, and filled with men, women and children making music.

Sergius' boatmen recognized the craft, deep in the water, black and long, and with graceful upturned ends.

"Fishermen!" they said.

And he rejoined: "Yes. The Princess Irene gives them a fete. Make haste. I will go with them. Fall in behind."

"Yes, yes—a good woman! Of such are the Saints!" they said, signing the cross on breast arid brow.

The singing and the gala air of the party put Sergius in his wonted spirits; and as here and there other boats fell into the line, similarly decorated, their occupants adding to the volume of the singing, by the time Therapia was sighted the good–natured, happy fishermen had given him of their floral abundance, and adopted him.

What a scene the Therapian bay presented! Boats, boats, boats—hundreds of them in motion, hundreds lining the shore, the water faithfully repeating every detail of ornature, and apparently a–quiver with pleasure. The town was gay with colors; while on the summit and sides of the opposite promontory every available point answered flaunt with flaunt. And there were song and shouting, gladsome cries of children, responses

of mothers, and merriment of youth and maiden. Byzantium might be in decadence, her provinces falling away, her glory wasting; the follies of the court and emperors, the best manhood of the empire lost in cloisters and hermitages, the preference of the nobility for intrigue and diplomacy might be all working their deplorable results—nay, the results might be at hand! Still the passion of the people for fetes and holidays remained. Tastes are things of heredity. In nothing is a Byzantine of this day so nearly a classic Greek as in his delicacy and appreciation where permitted to indulge in the beautiful.

The boatmen passed through the gay entanglement of the bay slowly and skilfully, and finally discharged their passengers on the marble quay a little below the regular landing in front of the red pavilion over the entrance to the Princess' grounds. The people went in and out of the gate without hindrance; nor was there guard or policeman visible. Their amiability attested their happiness.

The men were mostly black–bearded, sunburned, large–handed, brawny fellows in breeches black and amply bagged, with red sashes and light blue jackets heavily embroidered. The legs below the knees were exposed, and the feet in sandals. White cloths covered their heads. Their eyes were bright, their movements agile, their air animated. Many of them sported amulets of shell or silver suspended by ribbons or silken cords around their bare necks. The women wore little veils secured by combs, but rather as a headdress, and for appearances. They also affected the sleeveless short jacket over a snowy chemise; and what with bright skirts bordered with worsted chenille, and sandal straps carried artfully above the ankles, they were not wanting in picturesqueness. Some of the very young amongst them justified the loveliness traditionally ascribed to the nymphs of Hellas and the fair Cycladean Isles. Much the greater number, however, were in outward seeming prematurely old, and by their looks, their voices ungovernably shrill, and the haste and energy with which they flung themselves into the amusement of the hour unconsciously affirmed that fishermen's wives are the same everywhere. One need not go far to find the frontiers of society—too frequently they are close under the favorite balcony of the king.

Something on the right cheek of the gate under the pavilion furnished an attraction to the visitors. When Sergius came up, he was detained by a press of men and women in eager discussion; and following their eyes and the pointing of their fingers, he observed a brazen plate overhead curiously inscribed. The writing was unintelligible to him as to his neighbors. It looked Turkish—or it might have been Arabic—or it might not have been writing at all. He stayed awhile listening to the conjectures advanced. Presently a gypsy approached leading a bear, which, in its turn, was drawing a lot of noisy boys. He stopped, careless of the unfriendly glances with which he was received, and at sight of the plate saluted it with a low salaam several times unctuously repeated.

"Look at the hamari there. He can tell what the thing means."

"Then ask him."

"I will. See here, thou without a religion, consort of brutes! Canst thou tell what this"—pointing to the plate—"is for? Come and look at it!"

"It is not needful for me to go nearer. I see it well enough. Neither am I without a religion. I do not merely profess belief in God—I believe in Him," the bear–keeper replied.

The fisherman took the retort and the laugh it occasioned good–humoredly, and answered: "Very well, we are even; and now perhaps thou canst tell me what I asked."

"Willingly, since thou canst be decent to a stranger… The young Mahommed, son of Amurath, Sultan of Sultans"—the gypsy paused to salute the title—"the young Mahommed, I say, is my friend." The bystanders laughed derisively, but the man proceeded. "He has resided this long time at Magnesia, the capital of a prosperous province assigned to his governorship. There never was one of such station so civil to his people, and much learning has had a good effect upon his judgment; it has taught him that the real virtue of amusement lies in its variety. Did he listen exclusively to his doctors discoursing of philosophy, or to his professor of mathematics, or to his poets and historians, he would go mad even as they are mad; wherefore, along with his studies, he hunts with hawk and hound; he tilts and tourneys; he plays the wandering minstrel; and not seldom

Joqard and I—hey, fellow, is it not so?" he gave the bear a tremendous jerk—"Joqard and I have been to audience with him in his palace."

"A wonderful prince no doubt; but I asked not of him. The plate, man—what of this plate? If nothing, then give way to Joqard."

"There are fools and fools—that is, there are plain fools and wise fools. The wise fool answering the plain fool, is always more particular with his premises than his argument."

The laugh was with the hamari again; after which he continued: "So, having done with explanation, now to satisfy you."

From the breast of his gown, he brought forth a piece of bronze considerably less than the plate on the gate, but in every other respect its counterpart.

"See you this?" he said, holding the bronze up to view.

There was quick turning from plate to plate, and the conclusion was as quick.

"They are the same, but what of it?"

"This—Joqard and I went up one day and danced for the Prince, and at the end he dismissed us, giving me a red silk purse fat with gold pieces, and to Joqard this passport. Mark you now. The evil minded used to beat us with cudgels and stones—I mean among the Turk—but coming to a town now, I tie this to Joqard's collar, and we have welcome. We eat and drink, and are given good quarters, and sped from morning to morning without charge."

"There is some magic in the plate, then?"

"No," said the hamari, "unless there is magic in the love of a people for the Prince to be their ruler. It certifies Joqard and I are of Prince Mahommed's friends, and that is enough for Turks; and the same yonder. By the sign, I know this gate, these grounds, and the owner of them are in his protection. But," said the bear–keeper, changing his tone, "seeing one civil answer deserves another, when was Prince Mahommed here?"

"In person? Never."

"Oh, he must have been."

"Why do you say so?"

"Because of the brass plate yonder."

"What does it prove?"

"Ah, yes!" the man answered laughingly. "Joqard and I pick up many odd things, and meet a world of people—don't we, fellow?" Another furious jerk of the leading strap brought a whine from the bear, "But it is good for us. We teach school as we go; and you know, my friend, for every *solidus* its equivalent in *noumia* is somewhere."

"I will give you a *noumia*, if you will give me an answer."

"A bargain—a bargain, with witnesses!"

Then after a glance into the faces around, as if summoning attention to the offer, the hamari proceeded.

"Listen. I say the brass up there proves Prince Mahommed was here in person. Wishing to notify his people that he had taken in his care everything belonging to this property, the owner included, the Prince put his signature to the proclamation."

"Proclamation?"

"Yes—you may call it plain brass, if you prefer; none the less the writing on it is *Mahommed:* and because such favors must bear his name on them, they are reserved for his giving. No other man, except the great Sultan, his father, would bestow one of them. Joqard had his from the Prince's hand directly; wherefore—I hope, friend, you have the *noumia* ready—the brass on this post must have been fixed there by the Prince with his own hand."

The fishermen were satisfied; and it was wonderful how interesting the safeguard then became to them. By report they knew Mahommed the prospective successor of the terrible Amurath; they knew him a soldier conspicuous in many battles; and from the familiar principle by which we admire or dread those possessed of qualities unlike and superior to our own, their ideas and speculations concerning him were wild and generally harsh. Making no doubt now that he had really been to the gate, they asked themselves, What could have been his object? To look at the plate was next thing to looking at the man. Even Sergius partook of the feeling. To

get a better view, he shifted his position, and was beset by inquietudes not in the understanding of the fishermen.

The Princess Irene, her property and dependents, were subjects of protection by the Moslem; that much was clear; but did she know the fact? Had she seen the Prince? Then the Hegumen's criticism upon the persistence with which she kept her residence here, a temptation to the brutalized unbeliever on the other shore, derived a point altogether new.

Sergius turned away, and passed into the well–tended grounds. While too loyal to the little mother, as he tenderly called the Princess, to admit a suspicion against her, with painful clearness, he perceived the opportunity the affair offered her enemies for the most extreme accusations; and he resolved to speak to her, and, if necessary, to remonstrate.

Traversing the shelled roadway up to the portico of the palace, he looked back through the red pavilion, and caught a glimpse of Joqard performing before a merry group of boys and elders male and female.

CHAPTER X

THE HAMARI

The love of all things living which was so positively a trait of character with the Princess Irene was never stinted in her dealings with her own country folk. On this occasion her whole establishment at Therapia was accorded her guests; yet, while they wandered at will merry–making through the gardens, and flashed their gay colors along the side and from the summit of the promontory, they seemed to have united in holding the palace in respectful reserve. None of them, without a special request, presumed to pass the first of the steps leading up into the building.

When Sergius, approaching from the outer gate, drew nigh the front of the palace, he was brought to a stop by a throng of men and women packed around a platform the purpose of which was declared by its use. It was low, but of generous length and breadth, and covered with fresh sail–cloth; at each corner a mast had been raised, with yard–arms well squared, and dressed profusely in roses, ferns, and acacia fronds. On a gallery swung to the base of the over–pending portico, a troupe of musicians were making the most of flute, cithara, horn, and kettle–drum, and not vainly, to judge from the flying feet of the dancers in possession of the boards.

Lifting his eyes above the joyous exhibition, he beheld the carven capitals of the columns, tied together with festoonery of evergreens, and relieved by garlands of shining flowers, and above the musicians, under a canopy shading her from the meridian sun, the Princess Irene herself. A bright carpet hanging down the wall enriched the position chosen by her, and in the pleasant shade, surrounded by young women, she sat with uncovered head and face, delighted with the music and the dancing—delighted that it was in her power to bring together so many souls to forget, though so briefly, the fretting of hard conditions daily harder growing. None knew better than she the rapidity of the national decadence.

It was not long until the young hostess noticed Sergius, taller of his high hat and long black gown; and careless as usual of the conventionalities, she arose, and beckoned to him with her fan; and the people, seeing whom she thus honored, opened right and left, and with good–will made way for him. Upon his coming her attendants drew aside—all but one, to whom for the moment he gave but a passing look.

The Princess received him seated. The youthful loveliness of her countenance seemed refined by the happiness she was deriving from the spectacle before her. He took the hand she extended him, kissed it respectfully, with only a glance at the simple but perfected Greek of her costume, and immediately the doubts, and fears, and questions, and lectures in outline he had brought with him from the city dropped out of mind. Suspicion could not look at her and live.

"Welcome, Sergius," she said, with dignity. "I was afraid you would not come to–day."

"Why not? If my little mother's lightest suggestions are laws with me, what are her invitations?"

For the first time he had addressed her by the affectionate term, and the sound was startling. The faintest flush spread over her cheek, admonishing him that the familiarity had not escaped attention. Greatly to his relief, she quietly passed the matter.

"You were at the *Pannychides?*" she asked.

"Yes, till daybreak."

"I thought so, and concluded you would be too weary to see us to–day. The Mystery is tedious."

"It might become so if too frequently celebrated. As it was, I shall not forget the hillside, and the multitude of frocked and cowled figures kneeling in the dim red light of the torches. The scene was awful."

"Did you see the Emperor?"

She put the question in a low tone.

"No," he returned. "His Majesty sent for our Hegumen to come to the Chapel. The good man took me with him, his book and torch bearer; but

when we arrived, the Emperor had passed in and closed the door, and I could only imagine him on his knees alone in the room, except as the relics about him were company."

"How unspeakably dismal!" she said with a shudder, adding in sorrowful reflection, "I wish I could help him, for he is a prince with a tender conscience; but there is no way—at least Heaven does not permit me to see anything for him in my gift but prayer."

Sergius followed her sympathetically, and was surprised when she continued, the violet gray of her eyes changing into subtle fire. "A sky all cloud; the air void of hope; enemies mustering everywhere on land; the city, the court, the Church rent by contending factions—behold how a Christian king, the first one in generations, is plagued! Ah, who can interpret for Providence? And what a miracle is prophecy!"

Thereupon the Princess bethought herself, and cast a hurried glance out over the garden.

"No, no! If these poor souls can forget their condition and be happy, why not we? Tell me good news, Sergius, if you have any—only the good. But see! Who is he making way through the throng yonder? And what is it he is leading?"

The transition of feeling, though sudden and somewhat forced, was successful; the Princess' countenance again brightened; and turning to follow her direction, Sergius observed Lael, who had not fallen back with the other attendants. The girl had been a modest listener; now there was a timid half smile on her face, and a glistening welcome in her eyes. His gaze stopped short of the object which had inspired his hostess with such interest, and dropped to the figured carpet at the guest's feet; for the feeling the recognition awakened was clouded with the taunt Demedes had flung at him in the hall of the monastery, and he questioned the rightfulness of this appearance. If she were not the daughter of the Prince of India, she was an—impostor was the word in his mind.

"I was expecting you," she said to him, artlessly.

Sergius raised his face, and was about to speak, when the Princess started from her seat, and moved to the low balustrade of the portico.

"Come," she called, "come, and tell me what this is."

Sergius left a friendly glance with Lael.

Where the roadway from the gate led up to the platform an opening had been made in the close wall of spectators attracted by the music and dancing. In the opening, the hamari was slowly coming forward, his turban awry, his brown face overrun and shining with perspiration, his sharp gypsy eyes full of merriment. With the leading strap over a shoulder, he tugged at Joqard. Sergius laughed to see the surprise of the men and women, and at the peculiar yells and screams with which they struggled to escape. But everybody appearing in good nature, he said to the Princess: "Do not be concerned. A Turk or Persian with a trained bear. I passed him at the gate."

He saw the opportunity of speaking about the brass plate on the post, and while debating whether to avail himself of it, the hamari caught sight of the party at the edge of the portico, stopped, surveyed them, then prostrated himself in the abjectest Eastern manner. The homage was of course to the Princess—so at least the assemblage concluded; and jumping to the idea that the bear–keeper had been employed by her for their divertisement, each man in the company resolved himself into an ally and proceeded to assist him. The musicians were induced to suspend their performance, and the dancers to vacate the platform; then, any number of hands helping them up, Joqard and his master were promoted to the boards, sole claimants of attention and favor.

The fellow was not in the least embarrassed. He took position on the platform in front of the Princess, and again saluted her Orientally, and with the greatest deliberation, omitting no point of the prostration. Bringing the bear to a sitting posture with folded paws, he bowed right and left to the spectators, and made a speech in laudation of Joqard. His grimaces and gesticulation kept the crowd in a roar; when addressing the Princess, his manner was respectful, even courtierly. Joqard and he had travelled the world over; they had been through the Far East, and through the lands of the Frank and Gaul; they had crossed Europe from Paris to the Black Sea, and up to the Crimea; they had appeared before the great everywhere—

Indian Rajahs, Tartar Khans, Persian Shahs, Turkish Sultans; there was no language they did not understand. The bear, he insisted, was the wisest of animals, the most susceptible of education, the most capable and willing in service. This the ancients understood better than the moderns, for in recognition of his superiority they had twice exalted him to the Heavens, and in both instances near the star that knew no deviation. The hamari was a master of amplification, and his anecdotes never failed their purpose.

"Now," he said, "I do not care what the subject of discourse may be; one thing is true—my audience is always composed of believers and unbelievers; and as between them"—here he addressed himself to the Princess—"as between them, O Most Illustrious of women, my difficulty has been to determine which class is most to be feared. Every philosopher must admit there is quite as much danger in the man who withholds his faith when it ought to be given, as in his opposite who hurries to yield it without reason. My rule as an auditor is to wait for demonstration. So"—turning to the assemblage—"if here any man or woman doubts that the bear is the wisest of animals, and Joqard the most learned and accomplished of bears, I will prove it." Then Joqard was called on.

"For attend, O Illustrious Princess!—and look ye, O men and women, pliers of net and boat!—look ye all! Now shall Joqard himself speak for Joqard."

The hamari began talking to the bear in a jargon utterly unintelligible to his hearers, though they fell to listening with might and main, and were silent that they might hear. Nothing could have been more earnest than his communications, whatever they were; at times he put an arm about the brute's neck; at times he whispered in its ear; and in return it bowed and grunted assent, or growled and shook its head in refusal, always in the most knowing manner. In this style, to appearance, he was telling what he wanted done. Then retaining the leading strap, the master stepped aside, and Joqard, left to himself, proceeded to prove his intelligence and training by facing the palace, bringing his arms overhead, and falling forward. Everybody understood the honor intended for the Princess; the bystanders shouted; the attendants on the portico clapped their hands, for

indeed never in their remembrance had the prostration been more profoundly executed. Arising nimbly the performer wheeled about, reared on his hind feet, clasped his paws on his head, and acknowledged the favor of the commonalty by resolving himself into a great fur ball, and rolling a somersault. The acclamation became tumultuous. One admirer ran off and returned with an armful of wreaths and garlands, and presently Joqard was wearing them royally.

With excellent judgment the hamari proceeded next to hurry the exhibition, passing from one trick to another almost without pause until the wrestling match was reached. This has been immemorially the reliable point in performances of the kind he was giving, but he introduced it in a manner of his own.

Standing by the edge of the platform, as the friend and herald of Joqard, he first loudly challenged the men before him, every one ambitious of honor and renown, to come up and try a fall; and upon their hanging back, he berated them. Wherever a tall man stood observable above the level of heads, he singled him out. Failing to secure a champion, he finally undertook the contest himself.

"Ho, Joqard," he cried, while tying the leading strap around the brute's neck, "thou fearest nothing. Thy dam up in the old Caucasian cave was great of heart, and, like her, thou wouldst not quail before Hercules, were he living. But thou shalt not lick thy paws and laugh, thinking Hercules hath no descendant."

Retiring a few steps he tightened the belt about his waist, and drew his leathern jacket closer.

"Get ready!" he cried.

Joqard answered promptly and intelligently by standing up and facing him, and in sign of satisfaction with the prospect of an encounter so to his taste, he lolled the long red tongue out of his jaws. Was he licking his chops in anticipation of a feast or merely laughing? The beholders became quiet; and Sergius for the first time observed how very low in stature the hamari seemed.

"Look out, look out! O thou with the north star in the tip of thy tail! I am coming—for the honor of mankind, I am coming."

They danced around each other watching for an opening. "Aha! Now thou thinkest to get the advantage. Thou art proud of thy fame, and cunning, but I am a man. I have been in many schools. Look out!"

The hamari leaped in and with both hands caught the strap looped around Joqard's neck; at the same time he was himself caught in Joqard's ready arms. The growl with which the latter received the attack was angry, and lent the struggle much more than a mere semblance of danger. Round and about they were borne; now forward, then back; sometimes they were likely to tumble from the boards. The hamari's effort was to choke Joqard into submission; Joqard's was to squeeze the breath out of the hamari's body; and they both did their parts well.

After some minutes the man's exertions became intermittent. A little further on the certainty of triumph inspired Joqard to fierce utterances; his growls were really terrible, and he hugged so mercilessly his opponent grew livid in the face. The women and children began to cry and scream, and many of the men shouted in genuine alarm: "See, see! The poor fellow is choking to death!" The excitement and fear extended to the portico; some of the attendants there, unable to endure the sight, fled from it. Lael implored Sergius to save the hamari. Even the Princess was undecided whether the acting was real or affected.

Finally the crisis came. The man could hold out no longer; he let go his grip on the strap, and, struggling feebly to loose his body from the great black arms, shouted hoarsely: "Help, help!" As if he had not strength to continue the cry, he threw his hands up, and his head back gasping.

The Princess Irene covered her eyes. Sergius stepped over the balustrade; but before he could get further, a number of men were on the stage making to the rescue. And seeing them come, the hamari laid one hand on the strap, and with the other caught the tongue protruding from Joqard's open jaws; as a further point in the offensive so suddenly resumed, he planted a foot heavily on one of his antagonist's. Immediately the son of the proud Caucasian dam was flat on the boards simulating death.

Then everybody understood the play, and the merriment was heightened by the speech the hamari found opportunity to make his rescuers before they could recover from their astonishment and break up the tableau they formed. The Princess, laughing through her tears, flung the victor some gold pieces, and Lael tossed her fan to him. The prostrations with which he acknowledged the favors were marvels to behold.

By and by, quiet being restored, Joqard was roused from his trance, and the hamari, calling the musicians to strike up, concluded the performance with a dance.

CHAPTER XI

THE PRINCESS HEARS FROM THE WORLD

The sun shone clear and hot, and the guests in the garden were glad to rest in the shaded places of promenade along the brooksides and under the beeches and soaring pines of the avenues. Far up the extended hollow there was a basin first to receive the water from the conduit supposed to tap the aqueduct leading down from the forest of Belgrade. The noise of the little cataract there was strong enough to draw a quota of visitors. From the front gate to the basin, from the basin to the summit of the promontory, the company in lingering groups amused each other detailing what of fortune good and bad the year had brought them. The main features of such meetings are always alike. There were games by the children, lovers in retired places, and old people plying each other with reminiscences. The faculty of enjoyment changes but never expires.

An array of men chosen for the purpose sallied from the basement of the palace carrying baskets of bread, fruits in season, and wine of the country in water–skins. Dispersing themselves through the garden, they waited on the guests, and made distribution without stint or discrimination. The heartiness of their welcome may be imagined; while the thoughtful reader will see in the liberality thus characterizing her hospitality one of the secrets of the Princess's popularity with the poor along the Bosphorus. Nor that merely. A little reflection will lead up to an explanation of her preference for the Homeric residence by Therapia. The commonalty, especially the unfortunate amongst them, were a kind of constituency of hers, and she loved living where she could most readily communicate with them.

This was the hour she chose to go out and personally visit her guests. Descending from the portico, she led her household attendants into the garden. She alone appeared unveiled. The happiness of the many amongst

whom she immediately stepped touched every spring of enjoyment in her being; her eyes were bright, her cheeks rosy, her spirit high; in a word, the beauty so peculiarly hers, and which no one could look on without consciousness of its influence, shone with singular enhancement.

News that she was in the garden spread rapidly, and where she went everyone arose and remained standing. Now and then, while making acknowledgments to groups along the way, she recognized acquaintances, and for such, whether men or women, she had a smile, sometimes a word. Upon her passing, they pursued with benisons, "God bless you!""May the Holy Mother keep her!" Not unfrequently children ran flinging flowers at her feet, and mothers knelt and begged her blessing. They had lively recollection of a sickness or other overtaking by sorrow, and of her boat drawing to the landing laden with delicacies, and bringing what was quite as welcome, the charm of her presence, with words inspiring hope and trust. The vast, vociferous, premeditated Roman ovation, sonorously the Triumph, never brought a Consular hero the satisfaction this Christian woman now derived.

She was aware of the admiration which went with her, and the sensation was of walking through a purer and brighter sunshine. Nor did she affect to put aside the triumph there certainly was in the demonstration; but she accounted it the due of charity—a triumph of good work done for the pleasure there was in the doing.

At the basin mentioned as the landward terminus of the garden the progress in that direction stopped. Thence, after gracious attentions to the women and children there, the Princess set out for the summit of the promontory. The road taken was broad and smooth, and on the left hand lined from bottom to top with pine trees, some of which are yet standing.

The summit had been a place of interest time out of mind. From its woody cover, the first inhabitants beheld the Argonauts anchor off the town of Amycus, king of the Bebryces; there the vengeful Medea practised her incantations; and descending to acknowledged history, it were long telling the notable events of the ages landmarked by the hoary height. When the builder of the palace below threw his scheme of improvement

over the brow of the hill, he constructed water basins on different levels, surrounding them with raised walls artistically sculptured; between the basins he pitched marble pavilions, looking in the distance like airy domes on a Cyclopean temple; then he drew the work together by a tesselated pavement identical with the floor of the house of Caesar hard by the Forum in Rome.

Giving little heed to the other guests in occupancy of the summit, the attendants of the Princess broke into parties sight seeing; while she called Sergius to her, and conducted him to a point commanding the Bosphorus for leagues. A favorite lookout, in fact, the spot had been provided with a pavement and a capacious chair cut from a block of the coarse brown limestone native to the locality. There she took seat, and the ascent, though all in shade, having been wearisome, she was glad of the blowing of the fresh upper air.

From a place in the rear Sergius had witnessed the progress to the present halt. Every incident and demonstration had been in his view and hearing. The expressions of affection showered upon the Princess were delightful to him; they seemed so spontaneous and genuine. As testimony to her character in the popular estimate at least, they left nothing doubtful. His first impression of her was confirmed. She was a woman to whom Heaven had confided every grace and virtue. Such marvels had been before. He had heard of them in tradition, and always in a strain to lift those thus favored above the hardened commonplace of human life, creatures not exactly angels, yet moving in the same atmosphere with angels. The monasteries, even those into whose gates women are forbidden to look, all have stories of womanly excellence which the monks tell each other in pauses from labor in the lentil patch, and in their cells after vesper prayers. In brief, so did Sergius' estimate of the Princess increase that he was unaware of impropriety when, trudging slowly after the train of attendants, he associated her with heroines most odorous in Church and Scriptural memories; with Mothers Superior famous for sanctity; with Saints, like Theckla and Cecilia; with the Prophetess who was left by the wayside in the desert of Zin, and the later seer and singer, she who had her judgment–seat under the palm tree of Deborah.

Withal, however, the monk was uncomfortable. The words of his Hegumen pursued him. Should he tell the Princess? Assailed by doubts, he followed her to the lookout on the edge of the promontory.

Seating herself, she glanced over the wide field of water below; from the vessels there, she gazed across to Asia; then up at the sky, full to its bluest depth with the glory of day. At length she asked:

"Have you heard from Father Hilarion?"

"Not yet," Sergius replied.

"I was thinking of him," she continued. "He used to tell me of the primitive church—the Church of the Disciples. One of his lessons returns to me. He seems to be standing where you are. I hear his voice. I see his countenance. I remember his words: 'The brethren while of one faith, because the creed was too simple for division, were of two classes, as they now are and will always be'—ay, Sergius, as they will always be!—'But,' he said, 'it is worthy remembrance, my dear child, unlike the present habit, the rich held their riches with the understanding that the brethren all had shares in them. The owner was more than owner; he was a trustee charged with the safe–keeping of his property, and with farming it to the best advantage, that he might be in condition to help the greatest number of the Christian brotherhood according to their necessities.' I wondered greatly at the time, but not now. The delight I have today confirms the Father; for it is not in my palace and garden, nor in my gold, but in the power I derive from them to give respite from the grind of poverty to so many less fortunate than myself. 'The divine order was not to desist from getting wealth'—thus the Father continued—'for Christ knew there were who, labor as they might, could not accumulate or retain; circumstances would be against them, or the genius might be wanting. Poor without fault, were they to suffer, and curse God with the curse of the sick, the cold, the naked, the hungry? Oh, no! Christ was the representative of the Infinitely Merciful. Under his dispensation they were to be partners of the more favored.' Who can tell, who can begin to measure the reward there is to me in the laughter of children at play under the trees by the brooks, and in the

cheer and smiles of women whom I have been able to draw from the unvarying routine of toil like theirs?"

There was a ship with full spread sail speeding along so close in shore Sergius could have thrown a stone on its deck. He affected to be deeply interested in it. The ruse did not avail him.

"What is the matter?"

Receiving no reply, she repeated the question.

"My dear friend, you are not old enough in concealment to deceive me. You are in trouble. Come sit here… True, I am not an authorized confessor; yet I know the principle on which the Church defends the confessional. Let me share your burden. Insomuch as you give me, you shall be relieved."

It came to him then that he must speak.

"Princess," he began, striving to keep his voice firm, "you know not what you ask."

"Is it what a woman may hear?"

A step nearer brought him on the tesselated square.

"I hesitate, Princess, because a judgment is required of me. Hear, and help me first."

Then he proceeded rapidly:

"There is one just entered holy service. He is a member of an ancient and honorable Brotherhood, and by reason of his inexperience, doubtless, its obligations rest the heavier on his conscience. His superior has declared to him how glad he would be had he a son like him, and confiding in his loyalty, he intrusted him with gravest secrets; amongst others, that a person well known and greatly beloved is under watch for the highest of religious crimes. Pause now, O Princess, and consider the obligations inseparable from the relation and trust here disclosed… Look then to this other circumstance. The person accused condescended to be the friend and patron of the same neophyte, and by vouching for him to the head of the Church, put him on the road to favor and quick promotion. Briefly, O

Princess, to which is obligation first owing? The father superior or the patron in danger?"

The Princess replied calmly, but with feeling: "It is not a supposition, Sergius."

Though surprised, he returned: "Without it I could not have your decision first."

"Thou, Sergius, art the distressed neophyte."

He held his hands out to her: "Give me thy judgment."

"The Hegumen of the St. James' is the accuser."

"Be just, O Princess! To which is the obligation first owing?"

"I am the accused," she continued, in the same tone.

He would have fallen on his knees. "No, keep thy feet. A watchman may be behind me now."

He had scarcely resumed his position before she asked, still in the quiet searching manner: "What is the highest religious crime? Or rather, to men in authority, like the Hegumen of your Brotherhood, what is the highest of all crimes?"

He looked at her in mute supplication.

"I will tell you—HERESY."

Then, compassionating his suffering, she added: "My poor Sergius! I am not upbraiding you. You are showing me your soul. I see it in its first serious trial… I will forget that I am the denounced, and try to help you. Is there no principle to which we can refer the matter—no Christian principle? The Hegumen claims silence from you; on the other side, your conscience—I would like to say preference—impels you to speak a word of warning for the benefit of your patroness. There, now, we have both the dispute and the disputants. Is it not so?"

Sergius bowed his head.

"Father Hilarion once said to me: 'Daughter, I give you the ultimate criterion of the divineness of our religion—there cannot be an instance of human trial for which it does not furnish a rule of conduct and

consolation.' A profound saying truly! Now is it possible we have here at last an exception? I do not seek to know on which side the honors lie. Where are the humanities? Ideas of honor are of men conventional. On the other hand, the humanities stand for Charity. If thou wert the denounced, O Sergius, how wouldst thou wish to be done by?"

Sergius' face brightened.

"We are not seeking to save a heretic—we are in search of quiet for our consciences. So why not ask and answer further: What would befall the Hegumen, did you tell the accused all you had from him? Would he suffer? Is there a tribunal to sentence him? Or a prison agape for him? Or torture in readiness? Or a King of Lions? In these respects how is it with the friend who vouched for you to the head of the Church? Alas!"

"Enough—say no more!" Sergius cried impulsively. "Say no more. O Princess, I will tell everything—I will save you, if I can—if not, and the worst come, I will die with you."

Womanlike the Princess signalized her triumph with tears. At length she asked: "Wouldst thou like to know if I am indeed a heretic?"

"Yes, for what thou art, that am I; and then"—

"The same fire in the Hippodrome may light us both out of the world."

There was a ring of prophecy in the words.

"God forbid!" he ejaculated, with a shiver.

"God's will be done, were better!… So, if it please you," she went on, "tell me all the Hegumen told you about me."

"Everything?" he asked doubtfully.

"Why not?"

"Part of it is too wicked for repetition."

"Yet it was an accusation."

"Yes."

"Sergius, you are no match in cunning for my enemies. They are Greeks trained to diplomacy; you are"—she paused and half smiled—"only a pupil of Hilarion's. See now—if they mean to kill me, how important to

invent a tale which shall rob me of sympathy, and reconcile the public to my sacrifice. They who do much good, and no harm"—she cast a glance at the people swarming around the pavilions—"always have friends. Such is the law of kindness, and it never failed but once; but today a splinter of the Cross is worth a kingdom."

"Princess, I will hold nothing back."

"And I, Sergius—God witnessing for me—will speak to each denunciation thou givest me."

"There were two matters in the Hegumen's mind," Sergius began, but struck with the abruptness, he added apologetically: "I pray you, Princess, remember I speak at your insistence, and that I am not in any sense an accuser. It may be well to say also the Hegumen returned from last night's Mystery low in spirits, and much spent bodily, and before speaking of you, declared he had been an active partisan of your father's. I do not think him your personal enemy."

A mist of tears dimmed her eyes while the Princess replied: "He was my father's friend, and I am grateful to him; but alas! that he is naturally kind and just is now of small consequence."

"It grieves me"—

"Do not stop," she said, interrupting him.

"At the Father's bedside I received his blessing; and asked leave to be absent a few days. 'Where?' he inquired, and I answered: 'Thou knowest I regard the Princess Irene as my little mother. I should like to go see her.'"

Sergius sought his auditor's face at this, and observing no sign of objection to the familiarity, was greatly strengthened.

"The Father endeavored to persuade me not to come, and it was with that purpose he entered upon the disclosures you ask… 'The life the Princess leads'—thus he commenced—'and her manners, are outside the sanctions of society.'"

Here, from resting on her elbow, the listener sat upright, grasping the massive arm of the chair.

"Shall I proceed, O Princess?"

"Yes."

"This place is very public"—he glanced at the people above them.

"I will hear you here."

"At your pleasure… The Hegumen referred next to your going about publicly unveiled. While not positively wrong, he condemned the practice as a pernicious example; besides which there was a defiant boldness in it, he said, tending to make you a subject of discussion and indelicate remark."

The hand on the stony arm trembled.

"I fear, O Princess," Sergius continued, with downcast look, "that my words are giving you pain."

"But they are not yours. Go on."

"Then the Father came to what was much more serious."

Sergius again hesitated.

"I am listening," she said.

"He termed it your persistence in keeping up the establishment here at Therapia."

The Princess grew red and white by turns.

"He said the Turk was too near you; that unmarried and unprotected your proper place was in some house of God on the Islands, or in the city, where you could have the benefit of holy offices. As it was, rumor was free to accuse you of preferring guilty freedom to marriage."

The breeze fell off that moment, leaving the Princess in the centre of a profound hush; except for the unwonted labor of her heart, the leaves overhead were not more still. The sight of her was too oppressive—Sergius turned away. Presently he heard her say, as if to herself: "I am indeed in danger. If my death were not in meditation, the boldest of them would not dare think so foul a falsehood… Sergius," she said.

He turned to her, but she broke off diverted by another idea. Had this last accusation reference to the Emperor's dream of making her his wife?

Could the Emperor have published what took place between them? Impossible!

"Sergius, did the Hegumen tell you whence this calumny had origin?"

"He laid it to rumor merely."

"Surely he disclosed some ground for it. A dignitary of his rank and profession cannot lend himself to shaming a helpless woman without reason or excuse."

"Except your residence at Therapia, he gave no reason."

Here she looked at Sergius, and the pain in the glance was pitiful. "My friend, is there anything in your knowledge which might serve such a rumor?"

"Yes," he replied, letting his eyes fall.

"What!" and she lifted her head, and opened her eyes.

He stood silent and evidently suffering.

"Poor Sergius! The punishment is yours. I am sorry for you—sorry we entered on this subject—but it is too late to retire from it. Speak bravely. What is it you know against me? It cannot be a crime; much I doubt if it be a sin; my walk has been very strait and altogether in God's view. Speak!"

"Princess," he answered, "coming down from the landing, I was stopped by a concourse studying a brass plate nailed to the right–hand pillar of your gate. It was inscribed, but none of them knew the import of the inscription. The hamari came up, and at sight of it fell to saluting, like the abject Eastern he is. The bystanders chaffered him, and he retorted, and, amongst other things, said the brass was a safeguard directed to all Turks, notifying them that this property, its owner, and inmates were under protection of the Prince Mahommed. Give heed now, I pray you, O Princess, to this other thing of the man's saying. The notice was the Prince Mahommed's, the inscription his signature, and the Prince himself fixed the plate on the pillar with his own hand."

Sergius paused.

"Well," she asked.

"The inferences—consider them."

"State them."

"My tongue refuses. Or if I must, O Princess, I will use the form of accusation others are likely to have adopted. 'The Princess Irene lives at Therapia because Prince Mahommed is her lover, and it is a convenient place of meeting. Therefore his safeguard on her gate.'"

"No one could be bold enough to"—

"One has been bold enough."

"One?"

"The Hegumen of my Brotherhood."

The Princess was very pale.

"It is cruel—cruel!" she exclaimed. "What ought I to do?"

"Treat the safeguard as a discovery of to–day, and have it removed while the people are all present." She looked at him searchingly. On her forehead between the brows, he beheld a line never there before. More surprising was the failure of self–reliance observable in her request for counsel. Heretofore her courage and sufficiency had been remarkable. In all dealings with him she had proved herself the directress, quick yet decided. The change astonished him, so little was he acquainted with the feminine nature; and in reply he spoke hastily, hardly knowing what he had said. The words were not straightforward and honest; they were not becoming him any more than the conduct suggested was becoming her; they lingered in his ear, a wicked sound, and he would have recalled them—but he hesitated.

Here a voice in fierce malediction was heard up at the pavilions, together with a prodigious splashing of water. Laughter, clapping of hands, and other expressions of delight succeeded.

"Go, Sergius, and see what is taking place," said the Princess.

Glad of the opportunity to terminate the painful scene, he hastened to the reservoirs and returned.

"Your presence will restore quiet at once."

The people made way for their hostess with alacrity. The hamari, it appeared, had just arrived from the garden. Observing Lael in the midst of the suite of fair ladies, he advanced to her with many strange salutations. Alarmed, she would have run away had not Joqard broken from his master, and leaped with a roar into the water. The poor beast seemed determined to enjoy the bath. He swam, and dived, and played antics without number. In vain the showman, resorting to every known language, coaxed and threatened by turns—Joqard was self–willed and happy, and it were hard saying which appreciated his liberty most, he or the spectators of the scene.

The Princess, for the time conquering her pain of heart, interceded for the brute; whereupon the hamari, like a philosopher used to making the best of surprises, joined in the sport until Joqard grew tired, and voluntarily returned to control.

CHAPTER XII

LAEL TELLS OF HER TWO FATHERS

Word passed from the garden to the knots of people on the height: "Come down quickly. They are making ready for the boat race." Directly the reservoirs, the pavilions, and the tesselation about them were deserted.

The Princess Irene, with her suite, made the descent to the garden more at leisure, knowing the regatta would wait for her. So it happened she was at length in charge of what seemed a rear guard; but how it befell that Sergius and Lael drew together, the very last of that rear guard, is not of such easy explanation.

Whether by accident or mutual seeking, side by side the two moved slowly down the hill, one moment in the shade of the kingly pines, then in the glowing sunshine. The noises of the celebration, the shouting, singing, calling, and merry outcries of children ascended to them, and through the verdurousness below, lucent as a lake, gleams of color flashed from scarfs, mantles, embroidered jackets, and flaming petticoats.

"I hope you are enjoying yourself," he said to Lael, upon their meeting.

"Oh, yes! How could I help it—everything is delightful. And the Princess—she is so good and gracious. Oh, if I were a man, I should go mad with loving her!"

She spoke with enthusiasm; she even drew her veil partially aside; yet Sergius did not respond; he was asking himself if it were possible the girl could be an impostor. Presently he resolved to try her with questions.

"Tell me of your father. Is he well?"

At this she raised her veil entirely, and in turn asked: "Which father do you mean?"

"Which father," he repeated, stopping.

"Oh, I have the advantage of everybody else! I have two fathers."

He could do no more than repeat after her: "Two fathers!"

"Yes; Uel the merchant is one of them, and the Prince of India is the other. I suppose you mean the Prince, since you know him. He accompanied me to the landing this morning, and seated me in the boat. He was then well."

There was no concealment here. Yet Sergius saw the disclosure was not complete. He was tempted to go on.

"Two fathers! How can such thing be?"

She met the question with a laugh. "Oh! If it depended on which of them is the kinder to me, I could not tell you the real father."

Sergius stood looking at her, much as to say: "That is no answer; you are playing with me."

"See how we are falling behind," she then said. "Come, let us go on. I can talk while walking."

They set forward briskly, but it was noticeable that he moved nearer her, stooping from his great height to hear further.

"This is the way of it," she continued of her own prompting. "Some years ago, my father, Uel, the merchant, received a letter from an old friend of his father's, telling him that he was about to return to Constantinople after a long absence in the East somewhere, and asking if he, Uel, would assist the servant who was bearer of the note in buying and furnishing a house. Uel did so, and when the stranger arrived, his home was ready for him. I was then a little girl, and went one day to see the Prince of India, his residence being opposite Uel's on the other side of the street. He was studying some big books, but quit them, and picked me up, and asked me who I was? I told him Uel was my father. What was my name? Lael, I said. How old was I? And when I answered that also, he kissed me, and cried, and, to my wonder, declared how he had once a child named Lael; she looked like me, and was just my age when she died"—

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Sergius.

"Yes, and he then said Heaven had sent me to take her place. Would I be his Lael? I answered I would, if Uel consented. He took me in his arms,

carried me across the street and talked so Uel could not have refused had he wanted to."

The manner of the telling was irresistible. At the conclusion, she turned to him and said, with emotion: "There, now. You see I really have two fathers, and you know how I came by them: and were I to recount their goodness to me, and how they both love me, and how happy each one of them is in believing me the object of the other's affection, you would understand just as well how I know no difference between them."

"It is strange; yet as you tell it, little friend, it is not strange," he returned, seriously. They were at the instant in a bar of brightest sunlight projected across the road; and had she asked him the cause of the frown on his face, he could not have told her he was thinking of Demedes.

"Yes, I see it—I see it, and congratulate you upon being so doubly blessed. Tell me next who the Prince of India is."

She looked now here, now there, he watching her narrowly.

"Oh! I never thought of asking him about himself."

She was merely puzzled by an unexpected question.

"But you know something of him?"

"Let me think," she replied. "Yes, he was the intimate of my father Uel's father, and of his father before him."

"Is he so old then?"

"I cannot say how long he has been a family acquaintance. Of my knowledge he is very learned in everything. He speaks all the languages I ever heard of; he passes the nights alone on the roof of his house"—

"Alone on the roof of his house!"

"Only of clear nights, you understand. A servant carries a chair and table up for him, and a roll of papers, with pen and ink, and a clock of brass and gold. The paper is a map of the heavens; and he sits there watching the stars, marking them in position on the map, the clock telling him the exact time."

"An astronomer," said Sergius.

"And an astrologer," she added; "and besides these things he is a doctor, but goes only amongst the poor, taking nothing from them. He is also a chemist; and he has tables of the plants curative and deadly, and can extract their qualities, and reduce them from fluids to solids, and proportionate them. He is also a master of figures, a science, he always terms it, the first of creative principles without which God could not be God. So, too, he is a traveller—indeed I think he has been over the known world. You cannot speak of a capital or of an island, or a tribe which he has not visited. He has servants from the farthest East. One of his attendants is an African King; and what is the strangest to me, Sergius, his domestics are all deaf and dumb."

"Impossible!"

"Nothing appears impossible to him."

"How does he communicate with them?"

"They catch his meaning from the motion of his lips. He says signs are too slow and uncertain for close explanations."

"Still he must resort to some language."

"Oh, yes, the Greek."

"But if they have somewhat to impart to him?"

"It is theirs to obey, and pantomime seems sufficient to convey the little they have to return to him, for it is seldom more than, 'My Lord, I have done the thing you gave me to do.' If the matter be complex, he too resorts to the lip–speech, which he could not teach without first being proficient in it himself. Thus, for instance, to Nilo"—

"The black giant who defended you against the Greek?"

"Yes—a wonderful man—an ally, not a servant. On the journey to Constantinople, the Prince turned aside into an African Kingdom called Kash–Cush. I cannot tell where it is. Nilo was the King, and a mighty hunter and warrior. His trappings hang in his room now—shields, spears, knives, bows and arrows, and among them a net of linen threads. When he took the field for lions, his favorite game, the net and a short sword were

all he cared for. His throne room, I have heard my father the Prince say, was carpeted with skins taken by him in single combats."

"What could he do with the net, little Princess?"

"I will give you his account; perhaps you can see it clearly—I cannot. When the monster makes his leap, the corners of the net are tossed up in the air, and he is in some way caught and tangled… Well, as I was saying, Nilo, though deaf and dumb, of choice left his people and throne to follow the Prince, he knew not where."

"Oh, little friend! Do you know you are talking the incredible to me? Who ever heard of such thing before?"

Sergius' blue eyes were astare with wonder.

"I only speak what I have heard recounted by my father, the Prince, to my other father, Uel… What I intended saying was that directly the Prince established himself at home he began teaching Nilo to converse. The work was slow at first; but there is no end to the master's skill and patience; he and the King now talk without hindrance. He has even made him a believer in God."

"A Christian, you mean."

"No. In my father's opinion the mind of a wild man cannot comprehend modern Christianity; nobody can explain the Trinity; yet a child can be taught the almightiness of God, and won to faith in him."

"Do you speak for yourself or the Prince?"

"The Prince," she replied.

Sergius was struck with the idea, and wished to go further with it, but they were at the foot of the hill, and Lael exclaimed, "The garden is deserted. We may lose the starting of the race. Let us hurry."

"Nay, little friend, you forget how narrow my skirts are. I cannot run. Let us walk fast. Give me a hand. There now—we will arrive in time."

Near the palace, however, Sergius dropped into his ordinary gait; then coming to a halt, he asked: "Tell me to whom else you have related this pretty tale of the two fathers?"

His look and tone were exceedingly grave, and she studied his face, and questioned him in turn: "You are very serious—why?"

"Oh, I was wondering if the story is public?" More plainly, he was wondering whence Demedes had his information.

"I suppose it is generally known; at least I cannot see why it should not be."

The few words swept the last doubt from his mind; yet she continued: "My father Uel is well known to the merchants of the city. I have heard him say gratefully that since the coming of the Prince of India his business has greatly increased. He used to deal in many kinds of goods; now he sells nothing but precious stones. His patrons are not alone the nobles of Byzantium; traders over in Galata buy of him for the western markets, especially Italy and France. My other father, the Prince, is an expert in such things, and does not disdain to help Uel with advice."

Lael might have added that the Prince, in course of his travels, had ascertained the conveniency of jewels as a currency familiar and acceptable to almost every people, and always kept a store of them by him, from which he frequently replenished his protege's stock, allowing him the profits. That she did not make this further disclosure was probably due to ignorance of the circumstances; in other words, her artlessness was extreme enough to render her a dangerous confidant, and both her fathers were aware of it.

"Everybody in the bazaar is friendly to my father Uel, and the Prince visits him there, going in state; and he and his train are an attraction"—thus Lael proceeded. "On his departure, the questions about him are countless, and Uel holds nothing back. Indeed, it is more than likely he has put the whole mart and city in possession of the history of my adoption by the Prince."

In front of the palace she broke off abruptly: "But see! The landing is covered with men and women. Let us hurry."

Presently they issued from the garden, and were permitted to join the Princess.

CHAPTER XIII

THE HAMARI TURNS BOATMAN

The boatmen had taken up some of the marble blocks of the landing, and planting long oars upright in the ground, and fixing other oars crosswise on them, constructed a secure frame covered with fresh sail–cloth. From their vessels they had also brought material for a dais under the shelter thus improvised; another sail for carpet, and a chair on the dais completed the stand whence the Princess was to view and judge the race.

A way was opened for her through the throng, and with her attendants, she passed to the stand; and as she went, all the women near reached out their hands and reverently touched the skirt of her gown—so did their love for her trench on adoration.

The shore from the stand to the town, and from the stand again around the promontory on the south, was thronged with spectators, while every vantage point fairly in view was occupied by them; even the ships were pressed into the service; and somehow the air over and about the bay seemed to give back and tremble with the eagerness of interest everywhere discernible.

Between Fanar, the last northern point of lookout over the Black Sea, and Galata, down on the Golden Horn, there are about thirty hamlets, villages and cities specking the European shore of the Bosphorus. Each of them has its settlement of fishermen. Aside from a voluminous net, the prime necessity for successful pursuit of the ancient and honorable calling is a boat. Like most things of use amongst men, the vessel of preferred model here came of evolution. The modern tourist may yet see its kind drawn up at every landing he passes.

Proper handling, inclusive of running out and hauling in the seine, demanded a skilful crew of at least five men; and as whole lives were devoted to rowing, the proficiency finally attained in it can be fancied. It

was only natural, therefore, that the thirty communities should each insist upon having the crew of greatest excellence—the crew which could outrow any other five on the Bosphorus; and as every Byzantine Greek was a passionate gambler, the wagers were without end. Vauntings of the sort, like the Black Sea birds of unresting wings, went up and down the famous waterway.

At long intervals occasions presented for the proof of these men of pride; after which, for a period there was an admitted champion crew, and a consequent hush of the babble and brawl.

In determining to conclude the fete with a boat–race open to all Greek comers from the capital to the Cyanian rocks, the Princess Irene did more than secure a desirable climax; unconsciously, perhaps, she hit upon the measure most certain to bring peace to the thirty villages.

She imposed but two conditions on the competitors—they should be fishermen and Greeks.

The interval between the announcement of the race and the day set for it had been filled with boasting, from which one would have supposed the bay of Therapia at the hour of starting would be too contracted to hold the adversaries. When the hour came there were six crews present actually prepared to contest for the prize—a tall ebony crucifix, with a gilded image, to be displayed of holidays on the winning prow. The shrinkage told the usual tale of courage oozed out. There was of course no end of explanation.

About three o'clock, the six boats, each with a crew of five men, were held in front of the Princess' stand, representative of as many towns. Their prows were decorated with banderoles large enough to be easily distinguished at a distance—one yellow, chosen for Yenimahale; one blue, for Buyukdere; one white, for Therapia; one red, for Stenia; one green, for Balta–Liman; and one half white and half scarlet, for Bebek. The crews were in their seats—fellows with knotted arms bare to the shoulder; white shirts under jackets the color of the flags, trousers in width like petticoats. The feet were uncovered that, while the pull was in delivery, they might the better clinch the cleats across the bottom of the boat.

The fresh black paint with which the vessels had been smeared from end to end on the outside was stoned smoothly down until it glistened like varnish. Inside there was not a superfluity to be seen of the weight of a feather.

The contestants knew every point of advantage, and, not less clearly, they were there to win or be beaten doing their best. They were cool and quiet; much more so, indeed, than the respective clansmen and clanswomen.

From these near objects of interest, the Princess directed a glance over the spreading field of dimpled water to a galley moored under a wooded point across on the Asiatic shore. The point is now crowned with the graceful but neglected Kiosk of the Viceroy of Egypt. That galley was the thither terminus of the race course, and the winners turning it, and coming back to the place of starting, must row in all about three miles.

A little to the right of the Princess' stand stood a pole of height to be seen by the multitude as well as the rival oarsmen, and a rope for hoisting a white flag to the top connected it with the chair on the dais. At the appearance of the flag the boats were to start; while it was flying, the race was on.

And now the competitors are in position by lot from right to left. On bay and shore the shouting is sunk to a murmur. A moment more—but in that critical period an interruption occurred.

A yell from a number of voices in sharpest unison drew attention to the point of land jutting into the water on the north side not inaptly called the toe of Therapia, and a boat, turning the point, bore down with speed toward the sail–covered stand. There were four rowers in it; yet its glossy sides and air of trimness were significant of a seventh competitor for some reason behind time. The black flag at the prow and the black uniform of the oarsmen confirmed the idea. The hand of the Princess was on the signal rope; but she paused.

As the boat–hook of the newcomers fell on the edge of the landing, one of them dropped upon his knees, crying: "Grace, O Princess! Grace, and a little time!"

The four were swarthy men, and, unlike the Greeks they were seeking to oppose, their swart was a peculiarity of birth, a racial sign. Recognizing them, the spectators near by shouted: "Gypsies! Gypsies!" and the jeer passed from mouth to mouth far as the bridge over the creek at the corner of the bay; yet it was not ill–natured. That these unbelievers of unknown origin, separatists like the Jews, could offer serious opposition to the chosen of the towns was ridiculous. Since they excited no apprehension, their welcome was general.

"Why the need of grace? Who are you?" the Princess replied, gravely.

"We are from the valley by Buyukdere," the man returned.

"Are you fishermen?"

"Judged by our catches the year through, and the prices we get in the market, O Princess, it is not boasting to say our betters cannot be found, though you search both shores between Fanar and the Isles of the Princes."

This was too much for the bystanders. The presence they were in was not sufficient to restrain an outburst of derision.

"But the conditions of the race shut you out. You are not Greeks," the judge continued.

"Nay, Princess, that is according to the ground of judgment. If it please you to decide by birth and residence rather than ancestry, then are we to be preferred over many of the nobles who go in and out of His Majesty's gates unchallenged. Has not the sweet water that comes down from the hills seeking the sea through our meadow furnished drink for our fathers hundreds of years? And as it knew them, it knows us."

"Well answered, I must admit. Now, my friend, do as wisely with what I ask next, and you shall have a place. Say you come out winners, what will you do with the prize? I have heard you are not Christians."

The man raised his face the first time.

"Not Christians! Were the charge true, then, argument being for the hearing, I would say the matter of religion is not among the conditions. But I am a petitioner, not lawyer, and to my rude thinking it is better that I hold on as I began. Trust us, O Princess! There is a plane tree, wondrous

old, and with seven twin trunks, standing before our tents, and in it there is a hollow which shelters securely as a house. Attend me now, I pray. If happily we win, we will convert the tree into a cathedral, and build an altar in it, and set the prize above the altar in such style that all who love the handiworks of nature better than the artfulness of men may come and worship there reverently as in the holiest of houses, Sancta Sophia not excepted."

"I will trust you. With such a promise overheard by so many of this concourse, to refuse you a part in the race were a shame to the Immaculate Mother. But how is it you are but four?"

"We were five, O Princess; now one is sick. It was at his bidding we come; he thought of the hundreds of oarsmen who would be here one at least could be induced to share our fortune."

"You have leave to try them."

The man arose, and looked at the bystanders, but they turned away.

"A hundred noumiae for two willing hands!" he shouted.

There was no reply. "If not for the money, then in honor of the noble lady who has feasted you and your wives and children."

A voice answered out of the throng: "Here am I!" and presently the hamari appeared with the bear behind him.

"Here," he said, "take care of Joqard for me. I will row in the sick man's place, and"—

The remainder of the sentence was lost in an outburst of gibing—and laughter. Finally the Princess asked the rowers if they were satisfied with the volunteer.

They surveyed him doubtfully.

"Art thou an oarsman?" one of them asked.

"There is not a better on the Bosphorus. And I will prove it. Here, some of you—take the beast off my hands. Fear not, friend, Joqard's worst growl is inoffensive as thunder without lightning. That's a good man."

And with the words the hamari released the leading strap, sprang into the boat, and without giving time for protest or remonstrance, threw off his jacket and sandals, tucked up his shirt–sleeves, and dropped into the vacant fifth seat. The dexterity with which he then unshipped the oars and took them in hand measurably quieted the associates thus audaciously adopted; his action was a kind of certificate that the right man had been sent them.

"Believe in me," he said, in a low tone. "I have the two qualities which will bring us home winners—skill and endurance." Then he spoke to the Princess: "Noble lady, have I your consent to make a proclamation?"

The manner of the request was singularly deferential. Sergius observed the change, and took a closer look at him while the Princess was giving the permission.

Standing upon the seat, the hamari raised his voice: "Ho, here—there—every one!" and drawing a purse from his bosom, he waved it overhead, with a louder shout, "See!—a hundred noumiae, and not all copper either. Piece against piece weighed or counted, I put them in wager! Speak one or all. Who dares the chance?"

Takers of the offer not appearing on the shore, he shook the purse at his competitors.

"If we are not Christians," he said to them, "we are oarsmen and not afraid. See—I stake this purse—if you win, it is yours."

They only gaped at him.

He put the purse back slowly, and recounting the several towns of his opponents by their proper names in Greek, he cried: "Buyukdere, Therapia, Stenia, Bebek, Balta–Liman, Yenimahale—your women will sing you low to–night!" Then to the Princess: "Allow us now to take our place seventh on the left."

The bystanders were in a maze. Had they been served with a mess of brag, or was the fellow really capable? One thing was clear—the interest in the race had taken a rise perceptible in the judge's stand not less than on the crowded shore.

The four Gypsies, on their part, were content with the volunteer. In fact, they were more than satisfied when he said to them, as their vessel turned into position:

"Now, comrades, be governed by me; and besides the prize, if we win, you shall have my purse to divide amongst you man and man. Is it agreed?" And they answered, foreman and all, yes. "Very well," he returned. "Do you watch, and get the time and force from me. Now for the signal."

The Princess sent the starting flag to the top of the pole, and the boats were off together. A great shout went up from the spectators—a shout of men mingled with the screams of women to whom a hurrah or cheer of any kind appears impossible.

To warm the blood, there is nothing after all like the plaudits of a multitude looking on and mightily concerned. This was now noticeable. The eyes of all the rowers enlarged; their teeth set hard; the arteries of the neck swelled; and even in their tension the muscles of the arms quivered.

A much better arrangement would have been to allow the passage of the racers broadside to the shore; for then the shiftings of position, and the strategies resorted to would have been plain to the beholders; as it was, each foreshortened vessel soon became to them a black body, with but a man and one pair of oars in motion; and sometimes provokingly indistinguishable, the banderoles blew backward squarely in a line with the direction of the movement. Then the friends on land gave over exercising their throats; finally drawn down to the water's edge, and pressing on each other, they steadied and welded into a mass, like a wall.

Once there was a general shout. Gradually the boats had lost the formation of the start, and falling in behind each other, assumed an order comparable to a string. While this change was going on, a breeze unusually strong blew from the south, bringing every flag into view at the same time: when it was perceived that the red was in the lead. Forthwith the clansmen of Stenia united in a triumphant yell, followed immediately, however, by another yet louder. It was discovered, thanks to the same breeze, that the black banderole of the Gypsies was the last of the seven.

Then even those who had been most impressed by the bravado of the hamari, surrendered themselves to laughter and sarcasm.

"See the infidels!""They had better be at home taking care of their kettles and goats!""Turn the seven twins into a cathedral, will they? The devil will turn them into porpoises first!""Where is the hamari now—where? By St. Michael, the father of fishermen, he is finding what it is to have more noumiae than brains! Ha, ha, ha!"

Nevertheless the coolest of the thirty–five men then scudding the slippery waterway was the hamari—he had started the coolest—he was the coolest now.

For a half mile he allowed his crew to do their best, and with them he had done his best. The effort sufficed to carry them to the front, where he next satisfied himself they could stay, if they had the endurance. He called to them:

"Well done, comrades! The prize and the money are yours! But ease up a little. Let them pass. We will catch them again at the turn. Keep your eyes on me."

Insensibly he lessened the dip and reach of his oars; at last, as the thousands on the Therapian shore would have had it, the Gypsy racer was the hinderling of the pack. Afterwards there were but trifling changes of position until the terminal galley was reached.

By a rule of the race, the contestants were required to turn the galley, keeping it on the right; and it was a great advantage to be a clear first there, since the fortunate party could then make the round unhindered and in the least space. The struggle for the point began quite a quarter of a mile away. Each crew applied itself to quickening the speed—every oar dipped deeper, and swept a wider span;—on a little, and the keepers of the galley could hear the half groan, half grunt with which the coming toilers relieved the extra exertion now demanded of them;—yet later, they saw them spring to their feet, reach far back, and finish the long deep draw by falling, or rather toppling backward to their seats.

Only the hamari eschewed the resort for the present. He cast a look forward, and said quickly: "Attend, comrades!" Thereupon he added

weight to his left delivery, altering the course to an angle which, if pursued, must widen the circle around the galley instead of contracting it.

On nearing the goal the rush of the boats grew fiercer; each foreman, considering it honor lost, if not a fatal mischance, did he fail to be first at the turning–point, persisted in driving straight forward—a madness which the furious yelling of the people on the marker's deck intensified. This was exactly what the hamari had foreseen. When the turn began five of the opposing vessels ran into each other. The boil and splash of water, breaking of oars, splintering of boatsides; the infuriate cries, oaths, and blind striving of the rowers, some intent on getting through at all hazards, some turned combatants, striking or parrying with their heavy oaken blades; the sound of blows on breaking heads; plunges into the foaming brine; blood trickling down faces and necks, and reddening naked arms—such was the catastrophe seen in its details from the overhanging gunwale of the galley. And while it went on, the worse than confused mass drifted away from the ship's side, leaving a clear space through which, with the first shout heard from him during the race, the hamari urged his crew, and rounded the goal.

On the far Therapian shore the multitude were silent. They could dimly see every incident at the turn—the collision, fighting, and manifold mishaps, and the confounding of the banderoles. Then the Stenia colors flashed round the galley, with the black behind it a close second.

"Is that the hamari's boat next the leader?"

Thus the Princess, and upon the answer, she added: "It looks as if the Holy One might find servants among the irreclaimables in the valley."

Had the Gypsies at last a partisan?

The two rivals were now clear of the galley. For a time there was but one cry heard—"Stenia! Stenia!" The five oarsmen of that charming town had been carefully selected; they were vigorous, skilful, and had a chief well–balanced in judgment. The race seemed theirs. Suddenly—it was when the homestretch was about half covered—the black flag rushed past them.

Then the life went out of the multitude. "St. Peter is dead!" they cried—"St. Peter is dead! It is nothing to be a Greek now!" and they hung their

heads, refusing to be comforted.

The Gypsies came in first; and amidst the profoundest silence, they dropped their oars with a triumphant crash on the marble revetment. The hamari wiped the sweat from his face, and put on his jacket and sandals; pausing then to toss his purse to the foreman, and say: "Take it in welcome, my friends. I am content with my share of the victory," he stepped ashore. In front of the judge's stand, he knelt, and said: "Should there be a dispute touching the prize, O Princess, be a witness unto thyself. Thine eyes have seen the going and the coming; and if the world belie thee not—sometimes it can be too friendly—thou art fair, just and fearless."

On foot again, his courtierly manner vanished in a twinkling.

"Joqard, Joqard? Where are you?"

Some one answered: "Here he is."

"Bring him quickly. For Joqard is an example to men—he is honest, and tells no lies. He has made much money, and allowed me to keep it all, and spend it on myself. Women are jealous of him, but with reason—he is lovely enough to have been a love of Solomon's; his teeth are as pearls of great price; his lips scarlet as a bride's; his voice is the voice of a nightingale singing to the full moon from an acacia tree fronded last night; in motion, he is now a running wave, now a blossom on a swaying branch, now a girl dancing before a king—all the graces are his. Yes, bring me Joqard, and keep the world; without him, it is nothing to me."

While speaking, from a jacket pocket he brought out the fan Lael had thrown him from the portico, and used it somewhat ostentatiously to cool himself. The Princess and her attendants laughed heartily. Sergius, however, watched the man with a scarcely defined feeling that he had seen him. But where? And he was serious because he could not answer.

Taking the leading strap, when Joqard was brought, the hamari scrupled not to give the brute a hearty cuff, whereat the fishermen shook the sails of the pavilion with laughter; then, standing Joqard up, he placed one of the huge paws on his arm, and, with the mincing step of a lady's page, they disappeared.

CHAPTER XIV

THE PRINCESS HAS A CREED

"I shall ask you, Sergius, to return to the city to–night, for inquiry about the fete will be lively tomorrow in the holy houses. And if you have the disposition to defend me"—

"You doubt me, O Princess?"

"No."

"O little mother, let me once for all be admitted to your confidence, that in talking to me there may never be a question of my loyalty."

This, with what follows, was part of a conversation between the Princess Irene and Sergius of occurrence the evening of the fete in the court heretofore described, being that to which she retired to read the letter of introduction brought her by the young monk from Father Hilarion.

From an apartment adjoining, the voices of her attendants were occasionally heard blent with the monotonous tinkle of water overflowing the bowls of the fountain. In the shadowy depths of the opening above the court the stars might have been seen had not a number of lamps suspended from a silken cord stretched from wall to wall flooded the marble enclosure with their nearer light.

There was a color, so to speak, in the declaration addressed to her—a warmth and earnestness—which drew a serious look from the Princess—the look, in a word, with which a woman admits a fear lest the man speaking to her may be a lover.

To say of her who habitually discouraged the tender passion, and the thought of it, that she moved in an atmosphere charged with attractions irresistible to the other sex sounds strangely: yet it was true; and as a consequence she had grown miraculously quick with respect to appearances.

However, she now dismissed the suspicion, and replied:

"I believe you, Sergius, I believe you. The Holy Virgin sees how completely and gladly."

She went on presently, a tremulous light in her eyes making him think of tears. "You call me little mother. There are some who might laugh, did they hear you, yet I agree to the term. It implies a relation of trust without embarrassment, and a promise of mutual faithfulness warranting me to call you in return, Sergius, and sometimes 'dear Sergius.'… Yes, I think it better that you go back immediately. The Hegumen will want to speak to you in the morning about what you have seen and heard to–day. My boatmen can take you down, and arrived there, they will stay the night. My house is always open to them."

After telling her how glad he was for the permission to address her in a style usual in his country, he moved to depart, but she detained him.

"Stay a moment. To–day I had not time to deal as I wished with the charges the Hegumen prefers against me. You remember I promised to speak to you about them frankly, and I think it better to do so now; for with my confessions always present you cannot be surprised by misrepresentations, nor can doubt take hold of you so readily. You shall go hence possessed of every circumstance essential to judge how guilty I am."

"They must do more than talk," the monk returned, with emphasis.

"Beware, Sergius! Do not provoke them into argument—or if you must talk, stop when you have set them to talking. The listener is he who can best be wise as a serpent… And now, dear friend, lend me your good sense. Thanks to the generosity of a kinsman, I am mistress of a residence in the city and this palace; and it is mine to choose between them. How healthful and charming life is with surroundings like these—here, the gardens; yonder, the verdurous hills; and there, before my door, a channel of the seas always borrowing from the sky, never deserted by men. Guilt seeks exclusion, does it not? Well, whether you come in the day or the night, my gate is open; nor have I a warder other than Lysander; and his javelin is but a staff with which to steady his failing steps. There are no prohibitions

shutting me in. Christian, Turk, Gypsy—the world in fact—is welcome to see what all I have; and as to danger, I am defended better than with guards. I strive diligently to love my neighbors as I love myself, and they know it… Coming nearer the accusation now. I find here a freedom which not a religious house in the city can give me, nor one on the Isles, not Halki itself. Here I am never disturbed by sectaries or partisans; the Greek and the Latin wrangle before the Emperor and at the altars; but they spare me in this beloved retiracy. Freedom! Ah, yes, I find it in this retreat—this escape from temptations—freedom to work and sleep, and praise God as seems best to me—freedom to be myself in defiance of deplorable social customs—and there is no guilt in it… Coming still nearer the very charge, hear, O Sergius, and I will tell you of the brass on my gate, and why I suffer it to stay there; since you, with your partialities, account it a witness against me, it is in likelihood the foundation of the calumny associating me with the Turk. Let me ask first, did the Hegumen mention the name of one such associate?"

"No."

The Princess with difficulty repressed her feelings.

"Bear with me a moment," she said; "you cannot know the self–mastery I require to thus defend myself. Can I ever again be confident of my judgment? How doubts and fears will beset me when hereafter upon my own responsibility I choose a course, whatever the affair! Ah, God, whom I have sought to make my reliance, seems so far away! It will be for Him in the great day to declare if my purpose in living here be not escape from guiltiness in thought, from wrong and temptation, from taint to character. For further security, I keep myself surrounded with good women, and from the beginning took the public into confidence, giving it privileges, and inviting it to a study of my daily life. And this is the outcome!… I will proceed now. The plate on the gate is a safeguard"—

"Then Mahommed has visited you?"

The slightest discernible pallor overspread her face.

"Does it surprise you so much?… This is the way it came about. You remember our stay at the White Castle, and doubtless you remember the

knight in armor who received us at the landing—a gallant, fair–speaking, chivalrous person whom we supposed the Governor, and who prevailed upon us to become his guests while the storm endured. You recollect him?"

"Yes. He impressed me greatly."

"Well, let me now bring up an incident not in your knowledge. The eunuch in whose care I was placed for the time with Lael, daughter of the Prince of India, as my companion, to afford us agreeable diversion, obtained my consent to introduce an Arab story–teller of great repute among the tribes of the desert and other Eastern people. He gave us the name of the man—Sheik Aboo–Obeidah. The Sheik proved worthy his fame. So entertaining was he, in fact, I invited him here, and he came."

"Did I understand you to say the entertainment took place in Lael's presence?"

"She was my companion throughout."

"Let us be thankful, little mother."

"Ay, Sergius, and that I have witnesses down to the last incident. You may have heard how the Emperor and his court did me the high honor of a visit in state."

"The visit was notorious."

"Well, while the royal company were at table, Lysander appeared and announced Aboo–Obeidah, and, by permission of the Emperor, the story–teller was admitted, and remained during the repast. Now I come to the surprising event—Aboo–Obeidah was Mahommed!"

"Prince Mahommed—son of the terrible Amurath?" exclaimed Sergius. "How did you know him?"

"By the brass plate. When he went to his boat, he stopped and nailed the plate to the pillar. I went to look at it, and not understanding the inscription, sent to town for a Turk who enlightened me."

"Then the hamari was not gasconading?"

"What did he say?"

"He confirmed your Turk."

She gazed awhile at the overflowing of the fountain, giving a thought perhaps to the masquerader and his description of himself what time he was alone with her on the portico; presently she resumed:

"One word more now, and I dismiss the brass plate… I cannot blind myself, dear friend, to the condition of my kinsman's empire. It creeps in closer and closer to the walls of Constantinople. Presently there will be nothing of it left save the little the gates of the capital can keep. The peace we have is by the grace of an unbeliever too old for another great military enterprise; and when it breaks, then, O Sergius, yon safeguard may be for others besides myself—for many others—farmers, fishermen and townspeople caught in the storm. Say such anticipation followed you, Sergius—what would you do with the plate?"

"What would I do with it? O little mother, I too should take counsel of my fears."

"You approve my keeping it where it is, then? Thank you… What remains for explanation? Ah, yes—my heresy. That you shall dispose of yourself. Remain here a moment."

She arose, and passing through a doorway heavily draped with cloth, left him to the entertainment of the fountain. Returning soon, she placed a roll of paper in his hand.

"There," she said, "is the creed which your Hegumen makes such a sin. It may be heresy; yet, God helping me, and Christ and the Holy Mother lending their awful help, I dare die for it. Take it, dear Sergius. You will find it simple—nine words in all—and take this cover for it."

He wrapped the parcel in the white silken cover she gave him, making mental comparison, nevertheless, with the old Nicaean ordinances.

"Only nine words—O little mother!"

"Nine," she returned.

"They should be of gold."

"I leave them to speak for themselves."

"Shall I return the paper?"

"No, it is a copy… But it is time you were going. Fortunately the night is pleasant and starlit; and if you are tired, the speeding of the boat will rest you. Let me have an opinion of the creed at your leisure."

They bade each other good–night.

* * * * *

About eight o'clock next morning Sergius awoke. He had dropped on his cot undressed, and slept the sweet sleep of healthful youth; now, glancing about, he thought of the yesterday and the spacious garden, of the palace in the garden, of the Princess Irene, and of the conversation she held with him in the bright inner court. And the creed of nine words! He felt for it, and found it safe. Then his thought flew to Lael. She had exonerated herself. Demedes was a liar—Demedes, the presumptuous knave! He was to have been at the fete, but had not dared go. There was a limit to his audacity; and in great thankfulness for the discovery, Sergius tossed an arm over the edge of the narrow cot, and struck the stool, his solitary item of furniture. He raised his head, and looked at the stool, wondering how it came there so close to his cot. What was that he saw? A fan?—And in his chamber? Somebody had brought it in. He examined it cautiously. Whose was it? Whose could it be?—How!—No—but it *was* the very fan he had seen Lael toss to the hamari from the portico! And the hamari?

A bit of folded paper on the settle attracted his attention. He snatched it up, opened, and read it, and while he read his brows knit, his eyes opened to their full.

"PATIENCE—COURAGE—JUDGMENT!"

"Thou art better apprised of the meaning of the motto than thou wert yesterday."

"Thy seat in the Academy is still reserved for thee."

"Thou mayst find the fan of the Princess of India useful; with me it is embalmed in sentiment."

"Be wise. THE HAMARI."

He read the scrap twice, the second time slowly; then it fell rustling to the floor, while he clasped his hands and looked to Heaven. A murmur was

all he could accomplish.

Afterwards, prostrate on the cot, his face to the wall, he debated with himself, and concluded:

"The Greek is capable of any villany he sets about—of abduction and murder—and now indeed must Lael beware!"

CHAPTER XV

THE PRINCE OF INDIA PREACHES GOD TO THE GREEKS

We will now take the liberty of reopening the audience chamber of the palace of Blacherne, presuming the reader holds it in recollection. It is the day when, by special appointment, the Prince of India appears before the Emperor Constantine to present his idea of a basis for Universal Religious Union. The hour is exactly noon.

A report of the Prince's former audience with His Majesty had awakened general curiosity to see the stranger and hear his discourse. This was particularly the feeling in spiritual circles; by which term the most influential makers of public opinion are meant. A sharp though decorous rivalry for invitations to be present on the occasion ensued.

The Emperor, in robes varied but little from those he wore the day of the Prince's first audience, occupied the throne on the dais. On both sides of him the company sat in a semicircular arrangement which left them all facing the door of the main entrance, and permitted the placement of a table in a central position under every eye.

The appearance of the assemblage would have disappointed the reader; for while the court was numerously represented, with every functionary in his utmost splendor of decoration, it was outnumbered by the brethren of the Holy Orders, whose gowns, for the most part of gray and black material unrelieved by gayety in color, imparted a sombreness to the scene which the ample light of the chamber could not entirely dissipate, assisted though it was by refractions in plenitude from heads bald and heads merely tonsured.

It should be observed now that besides a very striking exterior, the Emperor fancied he discerned in the Prince of India an idea enriched by an extraordinary experience. At loss to make him out, impressed, not unpleasantly, with the mystery the stranger had managed, as usual, to leave

behind him, His Majesty had looked forward to this second appearance with interest, and turned it over with a view to squeezing out all of profit there might be in it. Why not, he asked himself, make use of the opportunity to bring the chiefs of the religious factions once more together? The explosive tendency which it seemed impossible for them to leave in their cells with their old dalmatics had made it politic to keep them apart widely and often as circumstances would permit; here, however, he thought the danger might be averted, since they would attend as auditors from whom speech or even the asking a question would be out of order unless by permission. The imperial presence, it was also judged, would restrain the boldest of them from resolving himself into a disputant.

The arrangement of the chamber for the audience had been a knotty problem to our venerable acquaintance, the Dean; but at last he submitted his plan, giving every invitee a place by ticket; the Emperor, however, blotted it out mercilessly. "Ah, my old friend," he said, with a smile which assuaged the pang of disapproval, "you have loaded yourself with unnecessary trouble. There was never a mass performed with stricter observance of propriety than we will now have. Fix the chairs thus"—and with a finger–sweep he described a semicircle—"here the table for the Prince. Having notified me of his intention to read from some ancient books, he must have a table—and let there be no reserved seat, except one for the Patriarch. Set a sedilium, high and well clothed, for him here on my right—and forget not a stool for his feet; for now to the bitterness of controversy long continued he has added a constriction of the lungs, and together they are grievous to old age."

"And Scholarius?"

"Scholarius is an orator; some say he is a prophet; I know he is not an official; so of the seats vacant when he arrives, let him choose for himself."

The company began coming early. Every Churchman of prominence in the city was in attendance. The reception was unusually ceremonious. When the bustle was over, and His Majesty at ease, the pages having arranged the folds of his embroidered vestments, he rested his hand lightly

on the golden cone of the right arm of the throne, and surveyed the audience with a quiet assurance becoming his birth in the purple, looking first to the Patriarch, and bowing to him, and receiving a salute in return. To the others on the right he glanced next, with a gracious bend of the head, and then to those on the left. In. the latter quarter he recognized Scholarius, and covertly smiled; if Gregory had taken seat on the left, Scholarius would certainly have crossed to the right. There was no such thing as compromise in his intolerant nature.

One further look the Emperor gave to where, near the door, a group of women was standing, in attendance evidently upon the Princess Irene, who was the only one of them seated. Their heads were covered by veils which had the appearance of finely woven silver. This jealous precaution, of course, cut off recognition; nevertheless such of the audience as had the temerity to cast their eyes at the fair array were consoled by a view of jewelled hands, bare arms inimitably round and graceful, and figures in drapery of delicate colors, and of designs to tempt the imagination without offence to modesty—a respect in which the Greek costume has never been excelled. The Emperor recognized the Princess, and slightly inclined his head to her. He then spoke to the Dean:

"Wait on the Prince of India, and if he is prepared, accompany him hither."

Passing out a side door, the master of ceremonies presently reappeared with Nilo in guidance. The black giant was as usual barbarously magnificent in attire; and staring at him, the company did not observe the burden he brought in, and laid on the table. He retired immediately; then they looked, and saw a heap of books and MSS. in rolls left behind him—quaint, curious volumes, so to speak, yellow with age and exposure, and suggestive of strange countries, and a wisdom new, if not of more than golden worth. And they continued to gaze and wonder at them, giving warrant to the intelligent forethought of the Prince of India which sent Nilo in advance of his own entry.

Again the door was thrown open, and this time the Dean ushered the Prince into the chamber, and conducted him toward the dais. Thrice the

foreigner prostrated himself; the last time within easy speaking distance of His Majesty, who silently agreed with the observant lookers–on, that he had never seen the salutations better executed.

"Rise, Prince of India," the Emperor said, blandly, and well pleased.

The Prince arose, and stood before him, his eyes downcast, his hands upon his breast—suppliancy in excellent pantomime.

"Be not surprised, Prince of India, at the assemblage you behold." Thus His Majesty proceeded. "Its presence is due, I declare to you, not so much to design of mine as to the report the city has had of your former audience, and the theme of which you then promised to discourse." Without apparently noticing the low reverence in acknowledgment of the compliment, he addressed himself to the body of listeners. "I regard it courtesy to our noble Indian guest to advise you, my Lords of the Court, and you, devotees of Christ and the Father, whose prayers are now the chief stay of my empire, that he is present by my appointment. On a previous occasion, he interested us—I speak of many of my very honorable assistants in Government—he interested us, I say, with an account of his resignation of the Kingship in his country, moved by a desire to surrender himself exclusively to study of religion. Under my urgency, he bravely declared he was neither Jew, Moslem, Hindoo, Buddhist nor Christian; that his travels and investigation had led him to a faith which he summed up by pronouncing the most holy name of God; giving us to understand he meant the God to whom our hearts have long been delivered. He also referred to the denominations into which believers are divided, and said his one motive in life was the bringing them together in united brotherhood; and as I cannot imagine a result more desirable, provided its basis obtain the sanction of our conscience, I will now ask him to proceed, if it be his pleasure, and speak to us freely."

Again the visitor prostrated himself in his best oriental manner; after which, moving backward, he went to the table and took a few minutes arranging the books and rolls. The spectators availed themselves of the opportunity to gratify their curiosity well as they could from mere

inspection of the man; and as the liberty was within his anticipations, it gave him but slight concern.

We about know how he appeared to them. We remember his figure, low, slightly stooped, and deficiently slender;—we remember the thin yet healthful looking face, even rosy of cheek;—we can see him in his pointed red slippers, his ample trousers of glossy white satin, his long black gown, relieved at the collar and cuffs with fine laces, his hair fallen on his shoulders, beard overflowing his breast;—we can even see the fingers, transparent, singularly flexible in operation, turning leaves, running down pages and smoothing them out, and placing this roll or that book as convenience required, all so lithe, swift, certain, they in a manner exposed the mind which controlled them. At length, the preliminaries finished, the Prince raised his eyes, and turned them slowly about—those large, deep, searching eyes—wells from which, without discoverable effort, he drew magnetism at his pleasure.

He began simply, his voice distinct, and cast to make itself heard, and not more.

"This"—his second finger was on a page of the large volume heretofore described—"this is the Bible, the most Holy of Bibles. I call it the rock on which your faith and mine are castled." There was a stretching of necks to see, and he did not allow the sensation to pass.

"And more—it is one of the fifty copies of the Bible translated by order of the first Constantine, under supervision of his minister Eusebius, well known to you for piety and learning."

It seemed at first every Churchman was on his feet, but directly the Emperor observed Scholarius and the Patriarch seated, the latter diligently crossing himself. The excitement can be readily comprehended by considering the assemblage and its composition of zealots and relic–worshippers, and that, while the tradition respecting the fifty copies was familiar, not a man there could have truly declared he had ever seen one of them—so had they disappeared from the earth.

"These are Bibles, also," the speaker resumed, upon the restoration of order—"Bibles sacred to those unto whom they were given as that

imperishable monument to Moses and David is to us; for they too are Revelations from God—ay, the very same God! This is the *Koran*—and these, the *Kings* of the Chinese—and these, the *Avesta* of the Magians of Persia—and these, the *Sutras* well preserved of Buddha—and these, the *Vedas* of the patient Hindoos, my countrymen."

He carefully designated each book and roll by placing his finger on it.

"I thank Your Majesty for the gracious words of introduction you were pleased to give me. They set before my noble and most reverend auditors my history and the subject of my discourse; leaving me, without wrong to their understanding, or waste of time or words, to invite them to think of the years it took to fit myself to read these Books—for so I will term them—years spent among the peoples to whom they are divine. And when that thought is in mind, stored there past loss, they will understand what I mean by Religion, and the methods I adopted and pursued for its study. Then also the value of the assertions I make can be intelligently weighed… This first—Have not all men hands and eyes? We may not be able to read the future in our palms; but there is no excuse for us if we do not at least see God in them. Similarity is law, and the law of Nature is the will of God. Keep the argument with you, O my Lord, for it is the earliest lesson I had from my travels… Animals when called to, the caller being on a height over them, never look for him above the level of their eyes; even so some men are incapable of thinking of the mysteries hidden out of sight in the sky; but it is not so with all; and therein behold the partiality of God. The reason of the difference between the leaves of trees not of the same species, is the reason of the inequality of genius among races of men. The Infinite prefers variety because He is more certainly to be perceived in it. At this stop now, my Lord, mark the second lesson of my travels. God, wishing above all things to manifest Himself and His character to all humanity, made choice amongst the races, selecting those superior in genius, and intrusted them with special revelations; whence we have the two kinds of religion, natural and revealed. Seeing God in a stone, and worshipping it, is natural religion; the consciousness of God in the heart, an excitant of love and gratitude inexpressible except by prayer and hymns of praise—that, O my Lord, is the work and the proof of revealed

religion… I next submit the third of the lessons I have had; but, if I may have your attention to the distinction, it is remarkable as derived from my reading"—here he covered all the books on the table with a comprehensive gesture—"my reading more than my travels; and I call it the purest wisdom because it is not sentiment, at the same time that it is without so much as a strain of philosophy, being a fact clear as any fact deducible from history—yes, my Lord, clearer, more distinct, more positive, most undeniable—an incident of the love the Universal Maker has borne his noblest creatures from their first morning—a Godly incident which I have had from the study of these Bibles in comparison with each other. In brief, my Lord, a revelation not intended for me above the generality of men; nevertheless a revelation to me, since I went seeking it—or shall I call it a recompense for the crown and throne I voluntarily gave away?"

The feeling the Prince threw into these words took hold of his auditors. Not a few of them were struck with awe, somewhat as if he were a saint or prophet, or a missionary from the dead returned with secrets theretofore locked up fast in the grave. They waited for his next saying—his third lesson, as he termed it—with anxiety.

"The Holy Father of Light and Life," the speaker went on, after a pause referable to his consummate knowledge of men, "has sent His Spirit down to the world, not once merely, or unto one people, but repeatedly, in ages sometimes near together, sometimes wide apart, and to races diverse, yet in every instance remarkable for genius."

There was a murmur at this, but he gave it no time.

"Ask you now how I could identify the Spirit so as to be able to declare to you solemnly, as I do in fear of God, that in the several repeated appearances of which I speak it was the very same Spirit? How do you know the man you met at set of sun yesterday was the man you saluted and had salute from this morning? Well, I tell you the Father has given the Spirit features by which it may be known—features distinct as those of the neighbors nearest you there at your right and left hands. Wherever in my reading Holy Books, like these, I hear of a man, himself a shining example of righteousness, teaching God and the way to God, by those signs I say to

my soul: 'Oh, the Spirit, the Spirit! Blessed is the man appointed to carry it about!'"

Again the murmur, but again he passed on.

"The Spirit dwelt in the Holy of Holies set apart for it in the Tabernacle; yet no man ever saw it there, a thing of sight. The soul is not to be seen; still less is the Spirit of the Most High; or if one did see it, its brightness would kill him. In great mercy, therefore, it has always come and done its good works in the world veiled; now in one form, now in another; at one time, a voice in the air; at another, a vision in sleep; at another, a burning bush; at another, an angel; at another, a descending dove"—

"Bethabara!" shouted a cowled brother, tossing both hands up.

"Be quiet!" the Patriarch ordered.

"Thus always when its errand was of quick despatch," the Prince continued. "But if its coming were for residence on earth, then its habit has been to adopt a man for its outward form, and enter into him, and speak by him; such was Moses, such Elijah, such were all the Prophets, and such"—he paused, then exclaimed shrilly—"such was Jesus Christ!"

In his study at home, the Prince had undoubtedly thought out his present delivery with the care due an occasion likely to be a turning–point in his projects, if not his life; and it must at that time have required of him a supreme effort of will to resolve upon this climax; as it was, he hesitated, and turned the hue of ashes; none the less his unknowing auditors renewed their plaudits. Even the Emperor nodded approvingly. None of them divined the cunning of the speaker; not one thought he was pledging himself by his applause to a kindly hearing of the next point in the speech.

"Now, my Lord, he who lives in a close vale shut in by great mountains, and goes not thence so much as to the top of one of the mountains, to him the vastness and beauty of the world beyond his pent sky–line shall be secret in his old age as they were when he was a child. He has denied himself to them. Like him is the man who, thinking to know God, spends his days reading one Holy Book. I care not if it be this one"—he laid his finger on the *Avesta*—"or this one"—in the same manner he signified the *Vedas*—"or this one"—touching the *Koran*—"or this one"—laying his

whole hand tenderly palm down on the most Holy Bible. "He shall know God—yes, my Lord, but not all God has done for men… I have been to the mountain's top; that is to say, I know these books, O reverend brethren, as you know the beads of your rosaries and what each bead stands for. They did not teach me all there is in the Infinite—I am in too much awe for such a folly of the tongue—yet through them I know His Spirit has dwelt on earth in men of different races and times; and whether the Spirit was the same Spirit, I fear not leaving you to judge. If we find in those bearing it about likenesses in ideas, aims, and methods—a Supreme God and an Evil One, a Heaven and a Hell, Sin and a Way to Salvation, a Soul immortal whether lost or saved—what are we to think? If then, besides these likenesses, we find the other signs of divine authority, acknowledged such from the beginning of the world—Mysteries of Birth, Sinlessness, Sacrifices, Miracles done—which of you will rise in his place, and rebuke me for saying there were Sons of God in Spirit before the Spirit descended upon Jesus Christ? Nevertheless, that is what I say."

Here the Prince bent over the table pretending to be in search of a page in the most Holy Book, while—if the expression be pardonable—he watched the audience with his ears. He heard the rustle as the men turned to each other in mute inquiry; he almost heard their question, though they but looked it; otherwise, if it had been dark, the silence would have been tomb–like. At length, raising his head, he beheld a tall, gaunt, sallow person, clad in a monkish gown of the coarsest gray wool, standing and looking at him; the eyes seemed two lights burning in darkened depths; the air was haughty and menacing; and altogether he could not avoid noticing the man. He waited, but the stranger silently kept his feet.

"Your Majesty," the Prince began again, perfectly composed, "these are but secondary matters; yet there is such light in them with respect to my main argument, that I think best to make them good by proofs, lest my reverend brethren dismiss me as an idler in words… Behold the Bible of the Bodhisattwa"—he held up a roll of broad–leafed vellum, and turned it dextrously for better exhibition—"and hear, while I read from it, of a Birth, Life and Death which took place a thousand and twenty–seven years before Jesus Christ was born." And he read:

"'Strong and calm of purpose as the earth, pure in mind as the water–lily, her name figuratively assumed, Maya, she was in truth above comparison. On her in likeness as the heavenly queen the Spirit descended. A mother, but free from grief or pain, she was without deceit.'" The Prince stopped reading to ask: "Will not my Lord see in these words a Mary also 'blessed above other women'?" Then he read on: …"'And now the queen Maya knew her time for the birth had come. It was the eighth day of the fourth moon, a serene and agreeable season. While she thus religiously observed the rules of a pure discipline, Bodhisattwa was born from her right side, come to deliver the world, constrained by great pity, without causing his mother pain or anguish.'" Again the Prince lifted his eyes from the roll. "What is this, my Lord, but an Incarnation? Hear now of the Child:… 'As one born from recumbent space, and not through the gates of life, men indeed regarded his exceeding great glory, yet their sight remained uninjured; he allowed them to gaze, the brightness of his person concealed for a time, as when we look upon the moon in heaven. His body nevertheless was effulgent with light, and, like the sun which eclipses the shining of the lamp, so the true gold–like beauty of Bodhisattwa shone forth and was everywhere diffused. Upright and firm, and unconfused in mind, he deliberately took seven steps, the soles of his feet resting evenly upon the ground as he went, his footmarks remained bright as seven stars. Moving like the lion, king of beasts, and looking earnestly toward the four quarters, penetrating to the centre the principles of truth, he spoke thus with the fullest assurance: This birth is in the condition of Buddha; after this I have done with renewed birth; *now only am I born this once, for the purpose of saving all the world.*'" A third time the Prince stopped, and, throwing up his hand to command attention, he asked: "My Lord, who will say this was not also a Redeemer? See now what next ensued"—and he read on: "'And now from the midst of Heaven there descended two streams of pure water, one warm, the other cold, and baptized his head.'" Pausing again, the speaker searched the faces of his auditors on the right and left, while he exclaimed in magnetic repetition: "Baptism—*Baptism*—BAPTISM AND MIRACLE!"

Constantine sat, like the rest, his attention fixed; but the gray–clad monk still standing grimly raised a crucifix before him as if taking refuge behind it.

"My Lord is seeing the likenesses these things bear to the conception, birth and mission of Jesus Christ, the later Blessed One, who is nevertheless his first in love. He is comparing the incidents of the two Incarnations of the Spirit or Holy Ghost; he is asking himself: 'Can there have been several Sons of God?' and he is replying: 'That were indeed merciful—Blessed be God!'"

The Emperor made no sign one way or the other.

"Suffer me to help my Lord yet a little more," the Prince continued, apparently unobservant of the lowering face behind the crucifix. "He remembers angels came down the night of the nativity in the cave by Bethlehem; he cannot forget the song they sung to the shepherds. How like these honors to the Bodhisattwa!"—and he read from the roll:… "'Meanwhile the Devas'—angels, if my Lord pleases—'the Devas in space, seizing their jewelled canopies, attending, raise in responsive harmony their heavenly songs to encourage him.' Nor was this all, my Lord," and he continued reading: "'On every hand the world was greatly shaken… The minutest atoms of sandal perfume, and the hidden sweetness of precious lilies, floated on the air, and rose through space, and then commingling came back to earth… All cruel and malevolent kinds of beings together conceived a loving heart; all diseases and afflictions amongst men, without a cure applied, of themselves were healed; the cries of beasts were hushed; the stagnant waters of the river courses flowed apace; no clouds gathered on the heavens, while angelic music, self–caused, was heard around… So when Bodhisattwa was born, he came to remove the sorrows of all living things. Mara alone was grieved.' O my reverend brethren!" cried the Prince, fervently, "who was this Mara that he should not share in the rejoicing of all nature else? In Christian phrase, Satan, and Mara alone was grieved."

"Do the likenesses stop with the births, my brethren are now asking. Let us follow the Bodhisattwa. On reaching the stage of manhood, he also

retired into the wilderness. 'The valley of the Se–na was level and full of fruit trees, with no noxious insects,' say these Scriptures: 'and there he dwelt under a sala tree. And he fasted nigh to death. The Devas offered him sweet dew, but he rejected it, and took but a grain of millet a day.' Now what think you of this as a parallel incident of his sojourn in the wilderness?" And he read:… "'Mara Devaraga, enemy of religion, alone was grieved, and rejoiced not. He had three daughters, mincingly beautiful, and of a pleasant countenance. With them, and all his retinue, he went to the grove of "fortunate rest," vowing the world should not find peace, and there'"—the Prince forsook the roll—"'and there he tempted Bodhisattwa, and menaced him, a legion of devils assisting.' The daughters, it is related, were changed to old women, and of the battle this is written:… 'And now the demon host waxed fiercer, and added force to force, grasping at stones they could not lift, or lifting them they could not let them go; their flying spears stuck fast in space refusing to descend; the angry thunder–drops and mighty hail, with them, were changed into five–colored lotus flowers; while the foul poison of the dragon snakes was turned into spicy–breathing air'—and Mara fled, say the Scriptures, fled gnashing his teeth, while Bodhisattwa reposed peacefully under a fall of heavenly flowers." The Prince, looking about him after this, said calmly: "Now judge I by myself; not a heart here but hears in the intervals of its beating, the text: 'Then was Jesus led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil'—and that other text: 'Then the devil leaveth him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him.' Verily, my Lord, was not the Spirit the same Spirit, and did it not in both incarnations take care of its own?"

Thereupon the Prince again sought for a page on the roll, watching the while with his ears, and the audience drew long breaths, and rested from their rigor of attention. Then also the Emperor spoke to the Prince.

"I pray you, Prince of India, take a little rest. Your labor is of the kind exhaustive to mind and body: and in thought of it, I ordered refreshments for you and these, my other guests. Is not this a good time to renew thyself?"

The Prince, rising from a low reverence, replied:

"Indeed Your Majesty has the kingly heart; but I pray you, in return, hear me until I have brought the parallel, my present point of argument, to an end; then I will most gladly avail myself of your great courtesy; after which—your patience, and the goodwill of these reverend fathers, holding on—I will resume and speedily finish my discourse."

"As you will. We are most interested. Or"—and the Emperor, glancing over toward the monk on his feet, said coldly: "Or, if my declaration does not fairly vouch the feeling of all present, those objecting have permission to retire upon the adjournment. We will hear you, Prince."

The ascetic answered by lifting his crucifix higher. Then, having found the page he wanted, the Prince, holding his finger upon it, proceeded:

"It would not become me, my Lord, to assume an appearance of teaching you and this audience, most learned in the Gospels, concerning them, especially the things said by the Blessed One of the later Incarnation, whom we call The Christ. We all know the Spirit for which he was both habitation and tongue, came down to save the world from sin and hell; we also know what he required for the salvation. So, even so, did Bodhisattwa. Listen to him now—he is talking to his Disciples:… 'I will teach you,' he said, to the faithful Ananda, 'a way of Truth, called the Mirror of Truth, which, if an elect disciple possess, he may himself predict of himself, "Hell is destroyed for me, and rebirth as an animal, or a ghost, or any place of woe. I am converted. I am no longer liable to be reborn in a state of suffering, and am assured of final salvation."'… Ah, Your Majesty is asking, will the parallel never end? Not yet, not yet! For the Bodhisattwa did miracles as well. I read again:… 'And the Blessed One came once to the river Ganges, and found it overflowing. Those with him, designing to cross, began to seek for boats, some for rafts of wood, while some made rafts of basket–work. Then the Blessed One, as instantaneously as a strong man would stretch forth his arm and draw it back again when he had stretched it forth, vanished from this side of the river, and stood on the further bank with the company of his brethren.'"

The stir the quotation gave rise to being quieted, the Prince, quitting the roll, said: "Like that, my Lord, was the Bodhisattwa's habit on entering assemblies of men, to become of their color—he, you remember, was from birth of the color of gold just flashed in the crucible—and in a voice like theirs instructing them. Then, say the Scriptures, they, not knowing him, would ask, Who may this be that speaks? A man or a God? Then he would vanish away. Like that again was his purifying the water which had been stirred up by the wheels of five hundred carts passing through it. He was thirsty, and at his bidding his companion filled a cup, and lo! the water was clear and delightful. Still more decided, when he was dying there was a mighty earthquake, and the thunders of heaven broke forth, and the spirits stood about to see him until there was no spot, say the Scriptures, in size even as the pricking of the point of the tip of a hair not pervaded with them; and he saw them, though they were invisible to his disciples; and then when the last reverence of his five hundred brethren was paid at his feet, the pyre being ready, it took fire of itself, and there was left of his body neither soot nor ashes—only the bones for relics. Then, again, as the pyre had kindled itself, so when the body was burned up streams of water descended from the skies, and other streams burst from the earth, and extinguished the fire. Finally, my Lord, the parallel ends in the modes of death. Bodhisattwa chose the time and place for himself, and the circumstances of his going were in harmony with his heavenly character. Death was never arrayed in such beauty. The twin Sala trees, one at the head of his couch, the other at the foot, though out of season, sprinkled him with their flowers, and the sky rained powder of sandal–wood, and trembled softly with the incessant music and singing of the floating Gandharvis. But he whose soul was the Spirit, last incarnate, the Christ"—the Prince stopped—the blood forsook his face—he took hold of the table to keep from falling—and the audience arose in alarm.

"Look to the Prince!" the Emperor commanded.

Those nearest the ailing man offered him their arms, but with a mighty effort he spoke to them naturally: "Thank you, good friends—it is nothing." Then he said louder: "It is nothing, my Lord—it is gone now. I was about to say of the Christ, how different was his dying, and with that

ends the parallel between him and the Bodhisattwa as Sons of God… Now, if it please Your Majesty, I will not longer detain your guests from the refreshments awaiting them."

A chair was brought for him; and when he was seated, a long line of servants in livery appeared with the collation.

In a short time the Prince was himself again. The mention of the Saviour, in connection with his death, had suddenly projected the scene of the Crucifixion before him, and the sight of the Cross and the sufferer upon it had for the moment overcome him.

CHAPTER XVI

HOW THE NEW FAITH WAS RECEIVED

It had been better for the Prince of India if he had not consented to the intermission graciously suggested by the Emperor. The monk with the hollow eyes who had arisen and posed behind his crucifix, like an exorcist, was no other than George Scholarius, whom, for the sake of historical conformity, we shall from this call Gennadius; and far from availing himself of His Majesty's permission to retire, that person was observed to pass industriously from chair to chair circulating some kind of notice. Of the refreshments he would none; his words were few, his manner earnest; and to him, beyond question, it was due that when order was again called, the pleasure the Prince drew from seeing every seat occupied was dashed by the scowling looks which met him from all sides. The divining faculty, peculiarly sharpened in him, apprised him instantly of an influence unfriendly to his project—a circumstance the more remarkable since he had not as yet actually stated any project.

Upon taking the floor, the Prince placed the large Judean Bible before him opened, and around it his other references, impressing the audience with an idea that in his own view the latter were of secondary importance.

"My Lord, and Reverend Sirs," he began, with a low salutation to the Emperor, "the fulness of the parallel I have run between the Bodhisattwa, Son of Maya, and Jesus Christ, Son of Mary, may lead to a supposition that they were the only Blessed Ones who have appeared in the world honored above men because they were chosen for the Incarnation of the Spirit. In these Scriptures," unrolling the *Sutra* or *Book of the Great Decease* —"frequent statements imply a number of Tathagatas or Buddhas of irregular coming. In this"—putting a finger on a Chinese *King*—"time is divided into periods termed *Kalpas*, and in one place it is said ninety–eight Buddhas illuminated one Kalpa**[26]** —that is, came and taught as

Saviours. Nor shall any man deny the Spirit manifest in each of them was the same Spirit. They preached the same holy doctrine, pointed out the same road to salvation, lived the same pure unworldly lives, and all alike made a declaration of which I shall presently speak; in other words, my Lord, the features of the Spirit were the same in all of them… Here in these rolls, parts of the Sacred Books of the East, we read of Shun. I cannot fix his days, they were so long ago. Indeed, I only know he must have been an adopted of the Spirit by his leaving behind him the Tao, or Law, still observed among the Chinese as their standard of virtue… Here also is the *Avesta*, most revered remains of the Magi, from whom, as many suppose, the Wise Men who came up to Jerusalem witnesses of the birth of the new King of the Jews were sent." This too he identified with his finger. "Its teacher is Zarathustra, and, in my faith, the Spirit descended upon him and abode with him while he was on the earth. The features all showed themselves in him—in his life, his instruction, and in the honors paid him through succeeding generations. His religion yet lives, though founded hundreds of years before your gentle Nazarene walked the waters of Galilee… And here, O my Lord, is a book abhorred by Christians"—he laid his whole hand on the Koran—"How shall it be judged? By the indifferent manner too many of those ready to die defending its divine origin observe it? Alas! What religion shall survive that test? In the visions of Mahomet I read of God, Moses, the Patriarchs—nay, my Lord, I read of him called the Christ. Shall we not beware lest in condemning Mahomet we divest this other Bible"—he reverently touched the great Eusebian volume—"of some of its superior holiness? He calls himself a Prophet. Can a man prophesy except he have in him the light of the Spirit?"

The question awoke the assemblage. A general signing of the Cross was indulged in by the Fathers, and there was groaning hard to distinguish from growls. Gennadius kept his seat, nervously playing with his rosary. The countenance of the Patriarch was unusually grave. In all his experience it is doubtful if the Prince ever touched a subject requiring more address than this dealing with the Koran. He resumed without embarrassment:

"Now, my Lord, I shall advance a step nearer my real subject. Think not, I pray, that the things I have spoken of the Bodhisattwa, of Shun, of Zarathustra, of Mahomet, likening them in their entertainment of the Spirit to Jesus, was to excite comparisons; such as which was the holiest, which did the most godly things, which is most worthy to be accounted the best beloved of the Father; for I come to bury all strife of the kind… I said I had been to the mountain's top; and now, my Lord, did you demand of me to single out and name the greatest of the wonders I thence beheld, I should answer: Neither on the sea, nor on the land, nor in the sky is there a wonder like unto the perversity which impels men to invent and go on inventing religions and sects, and then persecute each other on account of them. And when I prayed to be shown the reason of it, I thought I heard a voice, 'Open thine eyes—See!'… And the first thing given me to see was that the Blessed Ones who went about speaking for the Spirit which possessed them were divine; yet they walked the earth, not as Gods, but witnesses of God; asking hearing and belief, not worship; begging men to come unto them as guides sent to show them the only certain way to everlasting life in glory—only that and nothing more… The next thing I saw, a bright light in a white glass set on a dark hill, was the waste of worship men are guilty of in bestowing it on inferior and often unworthy objects. When Jesus prayed, it was to our Father in Heaven, was it not?—meaning not to himself, or anything human, or anything less than human… One other thing I was permitted to see; and the reserving it last is because it lies nearest the proposal I have come a great distance to submit to my Lord and these most reverend brethren in holiness. Every place I have been in which men are not left to their own imaginings of life and religion—in every land and island touched by revelation—a supreme God is recognized, the same in qualities—Creator, Protector, Father—Infinite in Power, Infinite in Love—the Indivisible One! Asked you never, my Lord, the object he had in intrusting his revelation to us, and why the Blessed Ones, his Sons in the Spirit, were bid come here and go yonder by stony paths? Let me answer with what force is left me. There is in such permissions but one intention which a respectful mind can assign to a being great and good as God—one altar, one worship, one prayer, and He

the soul of them. With a flash of his beneficent thought he saw in one religion peace amongst men. Strange—most strange! In human history no other such marvel! There has been nothing so fruitful of bickering, hate, murder and war. Such is the seeming, and so I thought, my Lord, until on the mountain's highest peak, whence all concerns lie in view below, I opened my eyes and perceived the wrestling of tongues and fighting were not about God, but about forms, and immaterialities, more especially the Blessed Ones to whom he had intrusted his Spirit. From the Ceylonesian: 'Who is worthy praise but Buddha?' 'No,' the Islamite answers: 'Who but Mahomet?' And from the Parsee; 'No—Who but Zarathustra?' 'Have done with your vanities,' the Christian thunders: 'Who has told the truth like Jesus?' Then the flame of swords, and the cruelty of blows—all in God's name!"

This was bold speaking.

"And now, my Lord," the Prince went on, his appearance of exceeding calmness belied only by the exceeding brightness of his eyes, "God wills an end to controversy and wars blasphemously waged in his name, and I am sent to tell you of it; and for that the Spirit is in me."

Here Gennadius again arose, crucifix in hand.

"I am returned from visiting many of the nations," the Prince continued, nothing daunted. "They demanded of me a faith broad enough for them to stand upon while holding fast the lesser ideas grown up in their consciences; and, on my giving them such a faith, they said they were ready to do the will, but raised a new condition. Some one must move first. 'Go find that one,' they bade me, 'and we will follow after.' In saying now I am ambassador appointed to bring the affair to Your Majesty and Your Majesty's people, enlightened enough to see the will of the Supreme Master, and of a courage to lead in the movement, with influence and credit to carry it peacefully forward to a glorious end, I well know how idle recommendation and entreaty are except I satisfy you in the beginning that they have the sanction of Heaven; and thereto now… I take no honor to myself as author of the faith presented in answer to the demand of the nations. In old cities there are houses under houses, along streets

underlying streets, and to find them, the long buried, men dig deep and laboriously; that did I, until in these old Testaments"—he cast a loving glance at all the Sacred Books—"I made a precious discovery. I pray Your Majesty's patience while I read from them… This from the Judean Bible: 'And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, This shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.' Thus did God, of whom we have no doubt, name himself to one chosen race… Next from a holy man of China who lived nearly five hundred years before the Christ was born: 'Although any one be a bad man, if he fasts and is collected, he may indeed offer sacrifices unto God.'**[27]** … And from the *Avesta*, this of the creed of the Magi: 'The world is twofold, being the work of Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu: all that is good in the world comes from the First Principle (which is God) and all that is bad from the latter (which is Satan). Angra Mainyu invaded the world after it was made by Ahura Mazda and polluted it, but the conflict will some day end.'**[28]** The First Principle here is God. But most marvellous, because of the comparison it will excite, hearken to this from the same Magian creed: 'When the time is full, a son of the lawgiver still unborn, named Saoshyant, will appear; then Angra Mainyu (Satan) and Hell will be destroyed, men will arise from the dead, and everlasting happiness reign over the world.' Here again the Lawgiver is God; but the Son—who is he? Has he come? Is he gone?… Next, take these several things from the *Vedas*: 'By One Supreme Ruler is the universe pervaded, even every world in the whole circle of nature. There is One Supreme Spirit which nothing can shake, more swift than the thought of man. The Primeval Mover even divine intelligence cannot reach; that Spirit, though unmoved, infinitely transcends others, how rapid soever their course; it is distant from us, yet very near; it pervades the whole system of worlds, yet is infinitely beyond it.'**[29]** Now, my Lord, and very reverend sirs, do not the words quoted come to us clean of mystery? Or have you the shadow of a doubt whom they mean, accept and consider the prayer I read you now from the same *Vedas:* 'O Thou who givest sustenance to the world, Thou sole mover of all, Thou who restrainest sinners, who pervadest yon great luminary which appearest as the Son of the Creator; hide thy struggling beams and expand thy spiritual

brightness that I may view thy most auspicious, most glorious, real form. OM, remember me, divine Spirit! OM, remember my deeds! Let my soul return to the immortal Spirit of God, and then let my body, which ends in ashes, return to dust.' Who is OM? Or is my Lord yet uncertain, let him heed this from the *Holiest Verse of the Vedas*: 'Without hand or foot, he runs rapidly, and grasps firmly; without eyes, he sees; without ears, he hears all; he knows whatever can be known, but there is none who knows him: Him the wise call the Great, Supreme, Pervading Spirit.'**[30]** … Now once more, O my Lord, and I am done with citation and argument. Ananda asked the Bodhisattwa what was the Mirror of Truth, and he had this answer: 'It is the consciousness that the elect disciple is in this world possessed of faith in Buddha, believing the Blessed One to be the Holy One, the Fully Enlightened One, Wise, Upright, Happy, World–knowing, Supreme, the bridler of men's wayward hearts, the Teacher of Gods and men—the Blessed Buddha.'**[31]** Oh, good my Lord, a child with intellect barely to name the mother who bore him, should see and say, Here God is described!"…

The Prince came to a full stop, and taking a fine silken cloth from a pocket in his gown, he carefully wiped the open pages of the Eusebian Bible, and shut it. Of the other books he made a separate heap, first dusting each of them. The assemblage watched him expectantly. The Fathers had been treated to strange ideas, matter for thought through many days and nights ahead; still each of them felt the application was wanting. "The purpose—give it us—and quickly!" would have been a fair expression of their impatience. At length he proceeded:

"Dealing with children, my Lord, and reverend sirs," he began, "it is needful to stop frequently, and repeat the things we have said; but you are men trained in argument: wherefore, with respect to the faith asked of me as I have told you by the nations, I say simply it is God; and touching his sanction of it, you may wrest these Testaments from me and make ashes of them, but you shall not now deny his approval of the Faith I bring you. It is not in the divine nature for God to abjure himself. Who of you can conceive him shrunk to so small a measure?"

The dogmatic vehemence amazed the listeners.

"Whether this idea of God is broad enough to accommodate all the religions grown up on the earth, I will not argue; for I desire to be most respectful"—thus the speaker went on in his natural manner. "But should you accept it as enough, you need not be at loss for a form in which to put it. 'Master,' the lawyer asked, 'which is the great commandment in the law?' And the Master answered: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind;' and he added: 'This is the first and great commandment.' My Lord, no man else ever invented, nor shall any man ever invent an expression more perfectly definitive of the highest human duty—the total of doctrine. I will not tell you who the master uttering it was; neither will I urge its adoption; only if the world were to adopt it, and abide by it, there would be an end to wars and rumors of war, and God would have his own. If the Church here in your ancient capital were first to accept it, what happiness I should have carrying the glad tidings to the peoples"—

The Prince was not allowed to finish the sentence.

"What do I understand, O Prince, by the term 'total of doctrine'?"

It was the Patriarch speaking.

"Belief in God."

In a moment the assemblage became uproarious, astounding the Emperor; and in the midst of the excitement, Gennadius was seen on tip–toe, waving his crucifix with the energy of command.

"Question—a question!" he cried.

Quiet was presently given him.

"In thy total of doctrine, what is Jesus Christ?"

The voice of the Patriarch, enfeebled by age and disease, had been scarcely heard; his rival's penetrated to the most distant corner; and the question happening to be the very thought pervading the assemblage, the churchmen, the courtiers, and most of the high officials arose to hear the reply.

In a tone distinct as his interlocutor's, but wholly without passion, the master actor returned:

"A Son of God."

"And Mahomet, the Father of Islam—what is he?"

If the ascetic had put the name of Siddartha, the Bodhisattwa, in his second question, his probing had not been so deep, nor the effect so quick and great; but Mahomet, the camel–driver! Centuries of feud, hate, crimination, and wars—rapine, battles, sieges, massacres, humiliations, lopping of territory, treaties broken, desecration of churches, spoliation of altars, were evoked by the name Mahomet.

We have seen it a peculiarity of the Prince of India never to forget a relation once formed by him. Now behind Constantine he beheld young Mahommed waiting for him—Mahommed and revenge. If his scheme were rejected by the Greeks, very well—going to the Turks would be the old exchange with which he was familiar, Cross for Crescent. To be sure there was little time to think this; nor did he think it—it appeared and went a glare of light—and he answered:

"He will remain, in the Spirit another of the Sons of God."

Then Gennadius, beating the air with his crucifix: "Liar—impostor—traitor! Ambassador of Satan thou! Behind thee Hell uncurtained! Mahomet himself were more tolerable! Thou mayst turn black white, quench water with fire, make ice of the blood in our hearts, all in a winking or slowly, our reason resisting, but depose the pure and blessed Saviour, or double his throne in the invisible kingdom with Mahomet, prince of liars, man of blood, adulterer, monster for whom Hell had to be enlarged—that shalt thou never! A body without a soul, an eye its light gone out, a tomb rifled of its dead—such the Church without its Christ!… Ho, brethren! Shame on us that we are guests in common with this fiend in cunning! We are not hosts to bid him begone; yet we can ourselves begone. Follow me, O lovers of Christ and the Church! To your tents, O Israel!"

The speaker's face was purple with passion; his voice filled the chamber; many of the monks broke from their seats and rushed howling and blindly eager to get nearer him. The Patriarch sat ashy white, helplessly crossing

himself. Constantine excellently and rapidly judging what became him as Emperor and host, sent four armed officers to protect the Prince, who held his appointed place apparently surprised but really interested in the scene —to him it was an exhibition of unreasoning human nature replying to an old–fashioned impulse of bigotry.

Hardly were the guards by the table, when Gennadius rushed past going to the door, the schismatics at his heels in a panic. The pulling and hauling, the hurry–skurry of the mad exit must be left to the imagination. It was great enough to frighten thoroughly the attendants of the Princess Irene. Directly there remained in the chamber with His Majesty, the attaches of the court, the Patriarch and his adherents. Then Constantine quietly asked:

"Where is Duke Notaras?"

There was much looking around, but no response.

The countenance of the monarch was observed to change, but still mindful, he bade the Dean conduct the Prince to him.

"Be not alarmed, Prince. My people are quick of temper, and sometimes they act hastily. If you have more to say, we are of a mind to hear you to the end."

The Prince could not but admire the composure of his august host. After a low reverence, he returned:

"Perhaps I tried the reverend Fathers unreasonably; yet it would be a much greater grief to me if their impatience extended to Your Majesty. I was not alarmed; neither have I aught to add to my discourse, unless it pleases you to ask of anything in it which may have been left obscure or uncertain."

Constantine signed to the Patriarch and all present to draw nearer.

"Good Dean, a chair for His Serenity."

In a short time the space in front of the dais was occupied.

"I understand the Prince of India has submitted to us a proposal looking to a reform of our religion," His Majesty said, to the Patriarch; "and courtesy requiring an answer, the violence to which we have just been

subjected, and the spirit of insubordination manifested, make it imperative that you listen to what I now return him, and with attention, lest a misquotation or false report lead to further trouble… Prince," he continued, "I think I comprehend you. The world is sadly divided with respect to religion, and out of its divisions have proceeded the mischiefs to which you have referred. Your project is not to he despised. It reminds me of the song, the sweetest ear ever listened to—'Peace and good will toward men.' Its adoption, nevertheless, is another matter. I have not power to alter the worship of my empire. Our present Creed was a conclusion reached by a Council too famous in history not to be conspicuously within your knowledge. Every word of it is infinitely sacred. It fixed the relations between God the Father, Christ the Son, and men to my satisfaction, and that of my subjects. Serenity, do thou say if I may apply the remark to the Church."

"Your Majesty," the Patriarch replied, "the Holy Greek Church can never consent to omit the Lord Jesus Christ from its worship. You have spoken well, and it had been better if the brethren had remained to hear you."

"Thanks, O most venerated—thanks," said the Emperor, inclining his head. "A council having established the creed of the Church," he resumed, to the Prince of India, "the creed is above change to the extent of a letter except by another council solemnly and authoritatively convoked. Wherefore, O Prince, I admit myself wiser of the views you have presented; I admit having been greatly entertained by your eloquence and rhetoric; and I promise myself further happiness and profit in drawing upon the stores of knowledge with which you appear so amply provided, results doubtless of your study and travel—yet you have my answer."

The faculty of retiring his thoughts and feelings deeper in his heart as occasion demanded, was never of greater service to the Prince than now; he bowed, and asked if he had permission to retire; and receiving it, he made the usual prostrations, and began moving backwards.

"A moment, Prince," said Constantine. "I hope your residence is permanently fixed in our capital."

"Your Majesty is very gracious, and I thank you. If I leave the city, it will be to return again, and speedily."

At the door of the palace the Prince found an escort waiting for him, and taking his chair, he departed from Blacherne.

CHAPTER XVII

LAEL AND THE SWORD OF SOLOMON

Alone in his house, the Prince of India was unhappy, but not, as the reader may hurriedly conclude, on account of the rejection by the Christians of his proposal looking to brotherhood in the bonds of religion. He was a trifle sore over the failure, but not disappointed. A reasonable man, and, what times his temper left him liberty to think, a philosopher, he could not hope after the observations he brought from Mecca to find the followers of the Nazarene more relaxed in their faith than the adherents of Mahomet. In short, he had gone to the palace warned of what would happen.

It was not an easy thing for him to fold up his grand design preparatory to putting it away forever; still there was no choice left him; and now he would move for vengeance. Away with hesitation.

Descending the heights of Blacherne, he had felt pity for Constantine who, though severely tried in the day's affair, had borne himself with dignity throughout; but it was Mahommed's hour. Welcome Mahommed!

Between the two, the Prince's predilections were all for the Turk, and they had been from the meeting at the White Castle. Besides personal accomplishments and military prestige, besides youth, itself a mighty preponderant, there was the other argument—separating Mahommed from the strongest power in the world, there stood only an ancient whose death was a daily expectation. "What opportunities the young man will have to offer me! I have but to make the most of his ambition—to loan myself to it—to direct it."

Thus the Seer reasoned, returning from Blacherne to his house.

At the door, however, he made a discovery. There the first time during the day he thought of her in all things the image of the Lael whom he had buried under the great stone in front of the Golden Gate at Jerusalem. We drop a grain in the ground, and asking nothing of us but to be let alone, it

grows, and flowers, and at length amazes us with fruit. Such had been the outcome of his adoption of the daughter of the son of Jahdai.

The Prince called Syama.

"Make ready the chair and table on the roof," he said.

While waiting, he ate some bread dipped in wine: then walked the room rubbing his hands as if washing them.

He sighed frequently. Even the servants could see he was in trouble.

At length he went to the roof. Evening was approaching. On the table were the lamp, the clock, the customary writing materials, a fresh map of the heavens, and a perfect diagram of a nativity to be cast.

He took the map in his hand, and smiled—it was Lael's work. "How she has improved!—and how rapidly!" he said aloud, ending a retrospect which began with the hour Uel consented to her becoming his daughter. She was unlettered then, but how helpful now. He felt an artist's pride in her growth in knowledge. There were tedious calculations which she took off his hands; his geometrical drawings of the planets in their Houses were frequently done in haste; she perfected them next day. She had numberless daughterly ways which none but those unused to them like him would have observed. What delight she took in watching the sky for the first appearance of the stars. In this work she lent him her young eyes, and there was such enthusiasm in the exclamations with which she greeted the earliest wink of splendor from the far–off orbs. And he had ailing days; then she would open the great Eusebian Scriptures at the page he asked for, and read—sometimes from Job, sometimes from Isaiah, but generally from Exodus, for in his view there was never man like Moses. The contest with Pharaoh—how prodigious! The battles in magic—what glory in the triumphs won! The luring the haughty King into the Red Sea, and bringing him under the walls of water suddenly let loose! What majestic vengeance!

Of the idle dreams of aged persons the possibility of attaching the young to them in sentimental bonds of strength to insure resistance to every other attachment is the idlest. Positive, practical, experienced though he was, the childless man had permitted this fantasy to get possession of him. He

actually brought himself to believe Lael's love of him was of that enduring kind. With no impure purpose, yet selfishly, and to bring her under his influence until of preference she could devote her life to him, with its riches of affection, admiration, and dutiful service, he had surrendered himself to her; therefore the boundless pains taken by him personally in her education, the surrounding her with priceless luxuries which he alone could afford—in brief, the attempt to fasten himself upon her youthful fancy as a titled sage and master of many mysteries. So at length it came to pass, while he was happy in his affection for her, he was even happier in her affection for himself; indeed he cultivated the latter sentiment and encouraged it in winding about his being until, in utter unconsciousness, he belonged to it, and, in repetition of experiences common to others, instead of Lael's sacrificing herself for him, he was ready to sacrifice everything for her. This was the discovery he made at the door of his house.

The reader should try to fancy him in the chair by the table on the roof. Evening has passed into night. The city gives out no sound, and the stars have the heavens to themselves. He is lost in thought—or rather, accepting the poetic fancy of a division of the heart into chambers, in that apartment of the palpitating organ of the Prince of India supposed to be the abode of the passions, a very noisy parliament was in full session. The speaker—that is, the Prince himself—submitted the question: Shall I remain here, or go to Mahommed?

Awhile he listened to Revenge, whose speech in favor of the latter alternative may be imagined; and not often had its appeals been more effective. Ambition spoke on the same side. It pointed out the opportunities offered, and dwelt upon them until the chairman nodded like one both convinced and determined. These had an assistant not exactly a passion but a kinsman collaterally—Love of Mischief—and when the others ceased, it insisted upon being heard.

On the other side, Lael led the opposition. She stood by the president's chair while her opponents were arguing, her arms round his neck; when they were most urgent, she would nurse his hand, and make use of some

trifling endearment; upon their conclusion, she would gaze at him mutely, and with tears. Not once did she say anything.

In the midst of this debate, Lael herself appeared, and kissed him on the forehead.

"Thou here!" he said.

"Why not?" she asked.

"Nothing—only"—

She did not give him time to finish, but caught up the map, and seeing it fresh and unmarked, exclaimed:

"You did so greatly to–day, you ought to rest."

He was surprised.

"Did so greatly?"

"At the palace."

"Put the paper down. Now, O my Gul Bahar"—and he took her hand, and carried it to his cheek, and pressed it softly there—"deal me no riddle. What is it you say? One may do well, yet come out badly."

"I was at the market in my father Uel's this afternoon," she began, "when Sergius came in."

A face wonderfully like the face of the man he helped lead out to Golgotha flashed before the Prince, a briefest passing gleam.

"He heard you discourse before the Emperor. How wickedly that disgusting Gennadius behaved!"

"Yes," the Prince responded darkly, "a sovereign beset with such spirits is to be pitied. But what did the young man think of my proposal to the Emperor?"

"But for one verse in the Testament of Christ"—

"Nay, dear, say Jesus of Nazareth,"

"Well, of Jesus—but for one verse he could have accepted your argument of many Sons of God in the Spirit"

"What is the verse?"

"It is where a disciple speaks of Jesus as the only begotten. Son."

The Wanderer smiled.

"The young man is too literal. He forgets that the Only Begotten Son may have had many Incarnations."

"The Princess Irene was also present," Lael went on. "Sergius said she too could accept your argument did you alter it"—

"Alter it!"—A bitter look wrung the Prince's countenance—"Sergius, a monk not yet come to orders, and Irene, a Princess without a husband. Oh, a small return for my surrender!… I am tired—very tired," he said impatiently—"and I have so much, so much to think of. Come, good night."

"Can I do nothing for you?"

"Yes, tell Syama to bring me some water."

"And wine?"

"Yes, some wine."

"Very well. Good night."

He drew her to his breast.

"Good night. O my Gul Bahar!"

She went lightly away, never dreaming of the parliament to which she left him.

When she was gone, he sat motionless for near an hour, seeing nothing in the time, although Syama set water and wine on the table. And it may be questioned if he heard anything, except the fierce debate going on in his heart. Finally he aroused, looked at the sky, arose, and walked around the table; and his expression of face, his actions, were those of a man who had been treading difficult ground, but was safely come out of it. Filling a small crystal cup, and holding the red liquor, rich with garnet sparkles, between his eyes and the lamp, he said:

"It is over. She has won. If there were for me but the years of one life, the threescore and ten of the Psalmist, it had been different. The centuries will bring me a Mahommed gallant as this one, and opportunities great as

he offers; but never another Lael. Farewell Ambition! Farewell Revenge! The world may take care of itself. I will turn looker–on, and be amused, and sleep… To hold her, I will live for her, but in redoubled state. So will I hurry her from splendor to splendor, and so fill her days with moving incidents, she shall not have leisure to think of another love. I will be powerful and famous for her sake. Here in this old centre of civilization there shall be two themes for constant talk, Constantine and myself. Against his rank and patronage, I will set my wealth. Ay, for her sake! And I will begin to–morrow."

The next day he spent in making drawings and specifications for a palace. The second day he traversed the city looking for a building site. The third day he bought the site most to his fancy. The fourth day he completed a design for a galley of a hundred oars, that it might be sea–going far as the Pillars of Hercules. Nothing ever launched from the imperial docks should surpass it in magnificence. When he went sailing on the Bosphorus, Byzantium should assemble to witness his going, and with equal eagerness wait the day through to behold him return. And for the four days, Lael was present and consulted in every particular. They talked like two children.

The schemes filled him with a delight which would have been remarkable in a boy. He packed his books and put away his whole paraphernalia of study—through Lael's days he would be an actor in the social world, not a student.

Of course he recurred frequently to the engagements with Mahommed. They did not disturb him. The Turk might clamor—no matter, there was the ever ready answer about the unready stars. The veteran intriguer even laughed, thinking how cunningly he had provided against contingencies. But there was a present practical requirement begotten of these schemes—he must have money—soldans by the bag full.

Very early in the morning of the fifth day, having studied the weather signs from his housetop, he went with Nilo to the harbor gate of Blacherne, seeking a galley suitable for an outing of a few days on the

Marmora. He found one, and by noon she was fitted out, and with him and Nilo aboard, flying swiftly around Point Serail.

Under an awning over the rudder–deck, he sat observing the brown–faced wall of the city, and the pillars and cornices of the noble structures towering above it. As the vessel was about passing the Seven Towers, now a ruin with a most melancholy history, but in that day a well–garrisoned fortress, he conversed with the master of the galley.

"I have no business in the strict meaning of the term," he said, in good humor. "The city has become tiresome to me, and I have fancied a run on the water would be bracing to body and restful to mind. So keep on down the sea. When I desire a change of direction, I will tell you." The mariner was retiring. "Stay," the Prince continued, his attention apparently caught by two immense gray rocks rising bluffly out of the blue rippling in which the Isles of the Princes seemed afloat—"What are those yonder? Islands, of course, but their names?"

"Oxia and Plati—the one nearest us is Oxia."

"Are they inhabited?"

"Yes and no," the captain replied, smiling. "Oxia used to have a convent, but it is abandoned now. There may be some hermits in the caves on the other side, but I doubt if the poor wretches have noumias to keep their altars in candles. It was so hard to coax visitors into believing God had ever anything to do with the dreary place that patrons concluded to give it over to the bad. Plati is a trifle more cheerful. Three or four monks keep what used to be the prison there; but they are strays from unknown orders, and live by herding a few starving goats and cultivating snails for the market."

"Have you been on either of them recently?"

"Yes, on Plati."

"When?"

"Within the year."

"Well, you excite my curiosity. It is incredible that there can be two such desolations in such close vicinity to yon famous capital. Turn and row me

around them."

The captain was pleased to gratify his passenger, and stood by him while the galley encircled Oxia, telling legends, and pointing out the caves to which celebrated anchorites had lent their names. He gave in full the story of Basil and Prusien, who quarrelled, and fought a duel to the scandal of the Church; whereupon Constantine VIII., then emperor, exiled them, the former to Oxia, the latter to Plati, where their sole consolation the remainder of their lives was gazing at each other from the mouths of their respective caverns. For some reason, Plati, to which he next crossed, was of more interest to the Prince than its sister isle. What a cruel exterior the prison at the north end had! Wolves and bats might live in it, but men—impossible! He drew back horrified when told circumstantially of the underground cells.

While yet on the eastern side, the passenger said he would like to go up to the summit.

"There," he exclaimed, pointing to a part of the bluff which appeared to offer a climb, "put me on that shelving rock. I think I can go up by it."

The small boat was lowered, and directly he set foot on the identical spot which received him when, in the night fifty–six years before, he made the ascent with the treasures of Hiram King of Tyre.

Almost any other man would have given at least a thought to that adventure; the slice out of some lives would have justified a tear; but he was too intent thinking about the jewels and the sword of Solomon.

His affected awkwardness in climbing amused the captain, watching him from the deck, but at last he gained the top of the bluff.

The plain there was the same field of sickly weeds and perishing vines, with here and there a shrub, and yonder a stunted olive tree, covered trunk and branches with edible snails. If it brought anything in the market, the crop, singular only to the Western mind, was plenteous enough to be profitable to its farmers. There too was the debris of the tower. With some anxiety he went to the stone which the reader will probably remember as having to be rolled away from the mouth of the hiding–place. It had not

been disturbed. These observations taken, he descended the bluff, and was received aboard the galley.

A very cautious man was the Prince of India. In commercial parlance, he was out to cash a draft on the Plati branch of his quadruple bank. He was not down to assist the captain of the galley to partnership with him in the business. So, after completing the circuit of Plati, the vessel bore away for Prinkipo and Halki, which Greek wealth and taste had converted into dreamful Paradises. There it lay the night and next day, while the easy–going passenger, out for air and rest, amused himself making excursions to the convents and neighboring hills.

The second night, a perfect calm prevailing, he took the small boat, and went out on the sea drifting, having provided himself with wine and water, the latter in a new gurglet bought for the trip. The captain need not be uneasy if he were late returning, he said on departing. Nilo was an excellent sailor, and had muscle and spirit to contend against a blow.

The tranquil environments of Prinkipo were enlivened by other parties also drifting. Their singing was borne far along the starlit sea. Once beyond sight and hearing, Nilo plied the oars diligently, bringing up an hour or two after midnight at the shelving rock under the eastern bluff of Plati. The way to the ruined tower was then clear.

Precisely as at the first visit when burial was the object, the concealing stone was pushed aside; after which the Prince entered the narrow passage crawling on his hands and knees. He was anxious. If the precious stones had been discovered and carried away, he would have to extend the voyage to Jaffa in order to draw from the Jerusalem branch of his bank. But the sword of Solomon—that was not in the power of man to duplicate—its loss would be irreparable.

The stones were mouldy, the passage dark, the progress slow. He had literally to feel every inch in front of him, using his hands as a caterpillar uses its antennae; but he did not complain—the difficulties were the inducements which led him to choose the hiding–place in the first instance. At length he went down a broken step, and, rising to his knees, slipped his left hand along the face of the wall until his fingers dropped

into a crack between rocks. It was the spot he sought; he knew it, and breathed easily. In murky lamplight, with mallet and chisel—ah, how long ago!—he had worked a shelf there, finishing it with an oblong pocket in the bottom. To mask the hole was simple. Three or four easy–fitting blocks were removed, and thrusting a hand in, he drew forth the sheepskin mantle of the elder Nilo.

In spite of the darkness, he could not refrain from unrolling the mildewed cover. The sword was safe! He drew the blade and shot it sharply back into the scabbard, then kissed the ruby handle, thinking again of the purchasing power there was in the relic which was yet more than a relic. The leather of the water–gurglet, stiff as wood, responded to a touch. The jewels were also safe, the great emerald with the rest. He touched the bags, counting from one to nine inclusively. Then remembering the ten times he had crawled into the passage to put the treasures away, he began their removal, and kept at it until every article was safely deposited in the boat.

On the way back to the galley he made new packages, using his mantle as a wrap for the sword, and the new gurglet for the bags of jewels.

"I have had enough," he exclaimed to the captain, dropping wearily on the deck about noon. "Take me to the city." After a moment of reflection, he added: "Land me after nightfall."

"We will reach the harbor before sundown."

"Oh, well! There is the Bosphorus—go to Buyukdere, and come back."

"But, my Lord, the captain of the gate may decline to allow you to pass."

The Prince smiled, and rejoined, with a thought of the bags in the gurglet thrown carelessly down by him: "Up with the anchor."

The sailor's surmise was groundless. Disembarking about midnight, he whispered his name to the captain at the gate of Blacherne, and, leaving a soldan in the official palm, was admitted without examination. On the street there was nothing curious in an old man carrying a mantle under his arm, followed by a porter with a half–filled gurglet on his shoulder.

Finally, the adventure safely accomplished, the Prince of India was home again, and in excellent humor.

One doubt assailed him—one only. He had just seen the height of Candilli, an aerial wonder in a burst of moonlight, and straightway his fancy had crowned it with a structure Indian in style, and of material to shine afar delicate as snow against the black bosomed mountain behind it. He was not a Greek to fear the Turks. Nay, in Turkish protection there was for him a guaranty of peaceable ownership which he could not see under Constantine. And as he was bringing now the wherewith to realize his latest dream, he gave his imagination a loosened rein.

He built the house; he heard the tinkling of fountains in its courts, and the echoes in the pillared recession of its halls; free of care, happy once more, with Lael he walked in gardens where roses of Persia exchanged perfumes with roses of Araby, and the daylong singing of birds extended into noon of night; yet, after all, to the worn, weary, droughted heart nothing was so soothing as the fancy which had been his chief attendant from the gate of Blacherne—that he heard strangers speaking to each other: "Have you seen the Palace of Lael?""No, where is it?""On the crest of Candilli." The Palace of Lael! The name confirmed itself sweeter and sweeter by repetition. And the doubt grew. Should he build in the city or amidst the grove of Judas trees on the crest of Candilli?

Just as he arrived before his door, he glanced casually across the street, and was surprised by observing light in Uel's house. It was very unusual. He would put the treasure away, and go over and inquire into the matter. Hardly was he past his own lintel when Syama met him. The face of the faithful servant showed unwonted excitement, and, casting himself at his master's feet, he embraced his knees, uttering the hoarse unintelligible cries with which the dumb are wont to make their suffering known. The Master felt a chill of fear—something had happened—something terrible—but to whom? He pushed the poor man's head back until he caught the eyes.

"What is it?" he asked.

Syama arose, took the Prince's hand, and led him out of the door, across the street, and into Uel's house. The merchant, at sight of them, rushed forward and hid his face in the master's breast, crying:

"She is gone—lost!—The God of our fathers be with her!"

"Who is gone? Who lost?"

"Lael, Lael—our child—our Gul Bahar."

The blood of the elder Jew flew to his heart, leaving him pale as a dead man; yet such was his acquired control of himself, he asked steadily: "Gone!—Where?"

"We do not know. She has been snatched from us—that is all we know."

"Tell me of it—and quickly."

The tone was imperious, and he pushed Uel from him.

"Oh! my friend—and my father's friend—I will tell you all. You are powerful, and love her, and may help where I am helpless." Then by piecemeal he dealt out the explanation. "This afternoon she took her chair and went to the wall in front of the Bucoleon—sunset, and she was not back. I saw Syama—she was not in your house. He and I set out in search of her. She was seen on the wall—later she was seen to descend the steps as if starting home—she was seen in the garden going about on the terrace—she was seen coming out of the front gate of the old palace. We traced her down the street—then she returned to the garden, through the Hippodrome, and there she was last seen. I called my friends in the market to my aid—hundreds are now looking for her."

"She went out in her chair, did you say?"

The steady voice of the Prince was in singular contrast with his bloodless face.

"Yes."

"Who carried it?"

"The men we have long had."

"Where are they?"

"We sought for them—they cannot be found."

The Prince kept his eyes on Uel's face. They were intensely, fiercely bright. He was not in a rage, but thinking, if a man can be said to think when his mind projects itself in a shower. Lael's disappearance was not voluntary; she was in detention somewhere in the city. If the purpose of the abduction were money, she would be held in scrupulous safety, and a day or two would bring the demand; but if—he did not finish the idea—it overpowered him. Pure steel in utmost flexion breaks into pieces without warning; so with this man now. He threw both hands up, and cried hoarsely: "Lend me, O God, of thy vengeance!" and staggering blindly, he would have fallen but for Syama.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FESTIVAL OF FLOWERS

The Academy of Epicurus was by no means a trifle spun for vainglory in the fertile fancy of Demedes; but a fact just as the Brotherhoods of the City were facts, and much more notorious than many of them.

Wiseacres are generally pessimistic. Academy of Epicurus indeed! For once there was a great deal in a name. The class mentioned repeated it sneeringly; it spoke to them, and loudly, of some philosophical wickedness.

Stories of the miraculous growth of the society were at first amusing; then the announcement of its housing excited loud laughter; but when its votaries attached the high sounding term *Temple* to their place of meeting, the clergy and all the devoutly inclined looked sober. In their view the word savored of outright paganism. Temple of the Academy of Epicurus! Church had been better—Church was at least Christian.

At length, in ease of the increasing interest, notice was authoritatively issued of a Festival of Flowers by the Academicians, their first public appearance, and great were the anticipations aroused by the further advertisement that they would march from their Temple to the Hippodrome.

The festival took place the afternoon of the third day of the Prince of India's voyage to Plati. More particularly, while that distinguished foreigner on the deck of the galley was quietly sleeping off the fatigue and wear of body and spirit consequent on the visit to the desolate island, the philosophers were on parade with an immense quota of Byzantines of both sexes in observation. About three thousand were in the procession, and from head to foot it was a mass of flowers.

The extravaganza deserved the applause it drew. Some of its features nevertheless were doubtfully regarded. Between the sections into which

the column was divided there marched small groups, apparently officers, clad in gowns and vestments, carrying insignia and smoking tripods well known to have belonged to various priesthoods of mythologic fame. When the cortege reached the Hippodrome every one in the galleries was reminded of the glory the first Constantine gained from his merciless forays upon those identical properties.

In the next place, the motto of the society—Patience, Courage, Judgment—was too frequently and ostentatiously exhibited not to attract attention. The words, it was observed, were not merely on banners lettered in gold, but illustrated by portable tableaux of exquisite appositeness and beauty. They troubled the wiseacres; for while they might mean a world of good, they might also stand for several worlds of bad. Withal, however, the youthfulness of the Academicians wrought the profoundest sensation upon the multitude of spectators. The march was three times round the interior, affording excellent opportunity to study the appearances; and the sober thinking, whom the rarity and tastefulness of the display did not hoodwink, when they discovered that much the greater number participating were beardless lads, shook their heads while saying to each other, At the rate these are going what is to become of the Empire? As if the decadence were not already in progress, and they, the croakers, responsible for it!

At the end of the first round, upon the arrival of the sections in front of the triple–headed bronze serpent, one of the wonders of the Hippodrome then as now, the bearers of the tripods turned out, and set them down, until at length the impious relic was partially veiled in perfumed smoke, as was the wont in its better Delphian days.

Nothing more shocking to the religionists could have been invented; they united in denouncing the defiant indecency. Hundreds of persons, not all of them venerable and frocked, were seen to rise and depart, shaking the dust from their feet. In course of tile third circuit, the tripods were coolly picked up and returned to their several places in the procession.

From a seat directly over the course, Sergius beheld the gay spectacle from its earliest appearance through the portal of the Blues to its exit by

the portal of the Greens.[32] His interest, the reader will bear reminding, was peculiar. He had been honored by a special invitation to become a member of the Academy—in fact, there was a seat in the Temple at the moment reserved for him. He had the great advantage, moreover, of exact knowledge of the objects of the order. Godless itself, it had been organized to promote godlessness. He had given much thought to it since Demedes unfolded the scheme to him, and found it impossible to believe persons of sound sense could undertake a sin so elaborate. If for any reason the State and Church were unmindful of it, Heaven certainly could not be.

Aside from the desire to satisfy himself of the strength of the Academy, Sergius was drawn to the Hippodrome to learn, if possible, the position Demedes held in it. His sympathy with the venerable Hegumen, with whom mourning for the boy astray was incessant, and sometimes pathetic as the Jewish king's, gradually became a grief for the prodigal himself, and he revolved plans for his reformation. What happiness could he one day lead the son to the father, and say: "Your prayers and lamentations have been heard; see—God's kiss of peace on his forehead!"

And then in what he had seen of Demedes—what courage, dash, and audacity—what efficiency—what store of resources! The last play of his—attending the fete of the Princess Irene as a bear tender—who but Demedes would have thought of such a role? Who else could have made himself the hero of the occasion, with none to divide honors with him except Joqard? And what a bold ready transition from bear tender to captain in the boat race! Demedes writhing in the grip of Nilo over the edge of the wall, death in the swish of waves beneath, had been an object of pity tinged with contempt—Demedes winner of the prize at Therapia was a very different person.

This feeling for the Greek, it is to be said next, was dashed with a lurking dread of him. If he had a design against Lael, what was there to prevent him from attempting it? That he had such a design, Sergius could not deny. How often he repeated the close of the note left on the stool after the Fisherman's fete. "Thou mayst find the fan of the Princess of India useful; with me it is embalmed in sentiment." He shall write with a pen

wondrous fine who makes the difference between love and sentiment clear. Behind the fete, moreover, there was the confession heard on the wall, illustrated by the story of the plague of crime. Instead of fading out in the Russian's mind it had become better understood—a consequence of the brightening process of residence in the city.

Twice the procession rounded the great curriculum. Twice Sergius had opportunity to look for the Greek, but without avail. So were the celebrants literally clothed in flowers that recognition of individuals was almost impossible. The first time, he sought him in the body of each passing section; the second time, he scanned the bearers of the standards and symbols; the third time, he was successful.

At the head of the parade, six or eight persons were moving on horseback. It was singular Sergius had not looked for Demedes amongst them, since the idea of him would have entitled the Greek to a chief seat in the Temple and a leading place when in the eye of the public. As it was, he could not repress an exclamation on making the discovery.

Like his associates, Demedes was in armor *cap–a–pie*. He also carried an unshod lance, a shield on arm, and a bow and quiver at his back; but helmet, breastplate, shield, lance and bow were masked in flowers, and only now and then a glint betrayed the underdress of polished steel. The steed he bestrode was housed in cloth which dragged the ground; but of the color of the cloth or its material not a word can be said, so entirely was it covered with floral embroidery of diverse hues and figures.

The decoration contributed little of grace to man or beast; nevertheless its richness was undeniable. To the spendthrifts in the galleries the effect was indescribably attractive. They studied its elaboration, conjecturing how many gardens along the Bosphorus, and out in the Isles of the Princes, had been laid under contribution for the accomplishment of the splendor. Thus in the saddle, Demedes could not have been accused of diminutiveness; he appeared tall, even burly; indeed, Sergius would never have recognized him had he not been going with raised visor, and at the instant of passing turned his face up, permitting it to be distinctly seen.

The exclamation wrung from the monk was not merely because of his finding the man; in sober truth, it was an unconventional expression provoked by finding him in the place he occupied, and a quick jump to the logical conclusion that the foremost person in the march was also the chief priest—if such were the title—in the Academy.

Thenceforward Sergius beheld little else of the show than Demedes. He forgot the impiety of the honors to the bronze serpent. There is no enigma to us like him who is broadly our antipodes in moral being, and whether ours is the good or the bad nature does not affect the saying. His feelings the while were strangely diverse. The election of the evil genius to the first place in the insidious movement was well done for the Academy; there would be no failure with him in control; but the poor Hegumen!

And now, the last circuit completed, the head of the bright array approached the Gate of the Greens. There the horsemen drew out and formed line on the right hand to permit the brethren to march past them. The afternoon was going rapidly. The shadow of the building on the west crept more noticeably across the carefully kept field. Still Sergius retained his seat watchful of Demedes. He saw him signal the riders to turn out—he saw the line form, and the sections begin to march past it—then an incident occurred of no appreciable importance at the moment, but replete with significancy a little later.

A man appeared on the cornice above the Gate—the Grate on the interior having a face resembling a very tall but shallow portico resting on slender pillars—and commenced lowering himself as if he meant to descend. The danger of the attempt drew all eyes to him. Demedes looked up, and hastily rode through the column toward the spot where the adventurer must alight. The spectators credited the young chief with a generous intent to be of assistance; but agile as a cat, and master of every nerve and muscle, the man gained one of the pillars and slid to the ground. The galleries of the Hippodrome found voice immediately.

While the acrobat hung from the cornice striving to get hold of the pillar with his feet and legs, Sergius was wrestling with the question, what could impel a fellow being to tempt Providence so rashly? If a messenger with

intelligence for some one in the procession, why not wait for him outside? In short, the monk was a trifle vexed; but doubly observant now, he saw the man hasten to Demedes, and Demedes bend low in the saddle to receive a communication from him. The courier then hurried away through the Gate, while the chief returned to his place; but, instructed probably by some power of divination proceeding from sympathy and often from suspicion, one of the many psychological mysteries about which we keep promising ourselves a day of enlightenment, Sergius observed a change in the latter. He was restless, impatient, and somewhat too imperative in hastening the retirement of the brethren. The message had obviously excited him.

Now Sergius would have freely given the best of his earthly possessions to have known at that moment the subject of the communication delivered by a route so extraordinary; but leaving him to his conjectures, there is no reason why the reader should not be more confidentially treated.

"Sir," the messenger had whispered to Demedes, "she has left her father's, and is coming this way."

"How is she coming?"

"In her sedan."

"Who is with her?"

"She is alone."

"And her porters?"

"The Bulgarians."

"Thank you. Go now—out by the Gate—to the keeper of the Imperial Cistern. Tell him to await me under the wall in the Bucoleon garden with my chair. He will understand. Come to the Temple tomorrow for your salary."

CHAPTER XIX

THE PRINCE BUILDS CASTLES FOR HIS GUL BAHAR

The words between Demedes and his courier may have the effect of additionally exciting the reader's curiosity; for better understanding, therefore, we will take the liberty of carrying him from the Hippodrome to the house of Uel the merchant.

Much has been said about the Prince of India's affection for Lael; so much indeed that there is danger of its being thought one sided. A greater mistake could scarcely be. She returned his love as became a daughter attentive, tender and obedient. Without knowing anything of his past life except as it was indistinctly connected with her family, she regarded him a hero and a sage whose devotion to her, multiform and unwearied, was both a delight and an honor. She was very sympathetic, and in everything of interest to him responded with interest. His word in request or direction was law to her. Such in brief was the charming mutuality between them.

The night before he started for Plati, Lael sat with him on the roof. He was happy of his resolution to stay with her. The moonlight was ample for them. Looking up into his face, her chin in a palm, an elbow on his knee, she listened while he talked of his plans, and was the more interested because he made her understand she was the inspiration of them all.

"The time for my return home is up," he said, forgetting to specify where the home was, "and I should have been off before this but for my little girl—my Gul Bahar"—and he patted her head fondly. "I cannot go and leave her; neither can I take her with me, for what would then become of father Uel? When she was a child it might not have been so hard for me to lose sight of her, but now—ah, have I not seen you grow day by day taller, stronger, wiser, fairer of person, sweeter of soul, until you are all I fancied you would be—until you are my ideal of a young woman of our dear old Israel, the loveliness of Judah in your eyes and on your cheek, and of a

spirit to sit in the presence of the Lord like one invited and welcome? Oh, I am very happy!"

He kept silence awhile, indulging in retrospect. If she could have followed him! Better probably that she could not.

"It is a day of ease to me, dear, and I cannot see any unlawfulness in extending the day into months, or a year, or years indefinitely, and in making the most of it. Can you?" he asked, smiling at her.

"I am but a handmaiden, and my master's eyes are mine," she replied.

"That was well said—ever so well said," he returned. "The words would have become Ruth speaking to her lord who was of the kindred of Elimelech… Yes, I will stay with my Gul Bahar, my most precious one. I am resolved. She loves me now, but can I not make her love me still more—Oh, doubt not, doubt not! Her happiness shall be the measure of her love for me. That is the right way, is it not?"

"My father is never wrong," Lael answered, laughing.

"Flatterer!" he exclaimed, pressing her cheeks between his hands… "Oh, I have it marked out already! In the dry lands of my country, I have seen a farmer, wanting to lead water to a perishing field, go digging along the ground, while the stream bubbled and leaped behind him, tame and glad as a petted lamb. My heart is the field to be watered—your love, O my pretty, pretty Gul Bahar, is the refreshing stream, and I will lead it after me—never fear!… Listen, and I will tell you how I will lead it. I will make you a Princess. These Greeks are a proud race, but they shall bow to you; for we will live amongst them, and you shall have things richer than their richest—trinkets of gold and jewels, a palace, and a train of women equal to that of the Queen who went visiting Solomon. They praise themselves when they look at their buildings, but I tell you they know nothing of the art which turns dreams into stones. The crags and stones have helped them to their models. I will teach them better—to look higher—to find vastness with grace and color in the sky. The dome of Sancta Sophia—what is it in comparison with the Hindoo masterpieces copied from the domes of God on the low–lying clouds in the distance opposite the sun?"

Then he told her of his palace in detail—of the fronts, no two of them alike—the pillars, those of red granite, those of porphyry, and the others of marble—windows which could not be glutted with light—arches such as the Western Kaliphs transplanted from Damascus and Bagdad, in form first seen in a print of the hoof of Borak. Then he described the interior, courts, halls; passages, fountains: and when he had thus set the structure before her, he said, softly smoothing her hair:

"There now—you have it all—and verily, as Hiram, King of Tyre, helped Solomon in his building, he shall help me also."

"How can he help you?" she asked, shaking her finger at him. "He has been dead this thousand years, and more."

"Yes, dear, to everybody but me," he answered, lightly, and asked in turn: "How do you like the palace?"

"It will be wonderful!"

"I have named it. Would you like to hear the name?"

"It is something pretty, I know."

"The Palace of Lael."

Her cry of delighted surprise, given with clasped hands and wide–open eyes, would have been tenfold payment were he putting her in possession of the finished house.

The sensation over, he told her of his design for a galley.

"We know how tiresome the town becomes. In winter, it is cheerless and damp; in summer, it is hot, dusty and in every way trying. Weariness will invade our palace—yes, dear, though we hide from it in the shady heart of our Hall of Fountains. We can provide against everything but the craving for change. Not being birds to fly, and unable to compel the eagles to lend us their wings, the best resort is a galley; then the sea is ours—the sea, wide, mysterious, crowded with marvels. I am never so near the stars as there. When a wave is bearing me up, they seem descending to meet me. Times have been when I thought the Pleiades were about to drop into my palm… Here is my galley. You see, child, the palace is to be yours, the galley mine."

Thereupon he described a trireme of a hundred and twenty oars, sixty on a side, and ended, saying: "Yes, the peerless ship will be mine, but every morning it shall be yours to say Take it here or there, until we have seen every city by the sea; and there are enough of them, I promise, to keep us going and going forever were it not that the weariness which drove us from our palace will afterwhile drive us back to it. How think you I have named my galley?"

"Lael," she answered.

"No, try again."

"The world is too full of names for me. Tell me."

"Gul Bahar," he returned.

Again she clasped her hands, and gave the little cry in his ears so pleasant.

Certainly the Prince was pleading with effect, and laying up happiness in great store to cheer him through unnumbered sterile years inevitably before him after time had resolved this Lael into a faint and fading memory, like the other Lael gone to dust under the stone at Jerusalem.

The first half of the night was nearly spent when he arose to conduct her across the street to Uel's house. The last words at the head of the steps were these: "Now, dear, to–morrow I must go a journey on business which will keep me three days and nights—possibly three weeks. Tell father Uel what I say. Tell him also that I have ordered you to stay indoors while I am absent, unless he can accompany you. Do you hear me?"

"Three weeks!" she cried, protestingly. "Oh, it will be so lonesome! Why may I not go with Syama?"

"Syama would be a wisp of straw in the hands of a ruffian. He could not even call for help."

"Then why not with Nilo?"

"Nilo is to attend me."

"Oh, I see," she said, with a merry laugh. "It is the Greek, the Greek, my persecutor! Why, he has not recovered from his fright yet; he has deserted me."

He answered gravely: "Do you remember a bear tender, one of the amusements at the fisherman's fete?"

"Oh, yes."

"He was the Greek."

"He!" she cried, astonished.

"Yes. I have it from Sergius the monk; and further, my child, he was there in pursuit of you."

"Oh, the monster! I threw him my fan!"

The Prince knew by the tremulous voice she was wounded, and hastened to say: "It was nothing. He deceived everybody but Sergius. I spoke of the pestilent fellow because you wanted a reason for my keeping you close at home. Perhaps I exacted too much of you. If I only knew certainly how long I shall be detained! The three weeks will be hard—and it may be Uel cannot go with you—his business is confining. So if you do venture out, take your sedan—everybody knows to whom it belongs—and the old Bulgarian porters. I have paid them enough to be faithful to us. Are you listening, child?"

"Yes, yes—and I am so glad!"

He walked down the stairs half repenting the withdrawal of his prohibition.

"Be it so," he said, crossing the street. "The confinement might be hurtful. Only go seldom as you can; then be sure you return before sunset, and that you take and keep the most public streets. That is all now."

"You are so good to me!" she said, putting her arm round his neck, and kissing him. "I will try and stay in the house. Come back early. Farewell."

Next day about noon the Prince of India took the galley, and set out for Plati.

The day succeeding his departure was long with Lael. She occupied herself with her governess, however, and did a number of little tasks such as women always have in reserve for a more convenient season.

The second day was much more tedious. The forenoon was her usual time for recitations to the Prince; she also read with him then, and practised talking some of the many languages of which he was master. That part of the day she accordingly whiled through struggling with her books.

She was earnest in the attempt at study; but naturally, the circumstances considered, she dropped into thinking of the palace and galley. What a delightful glorious existence they prefigured! And it was not a dream! Her father, the Prince of India, as she proudly and affectionately called him, did not deal in idle promises, but did what he said. And besides being a master of design in many branches of art, he had an amazing faculty of describing the things he designed. That is saying he had the mind's eye to see his conceptions precisely as they would appear in finished state. So in talking his subjects always seemed before him for portraiture. One can readily perceive the capacity he must have had for making the unreal appear real to a listener, and also how he could lead Lael, her hand in his, through a house more princely than anything of the kind in Constantinople, and on board a ship such as never sailed unless on a painted ocean—a house like the Taj Mahal, a vessel like that which burned on the Cydnus. She decided what notable city by the sea she wanted most to look at next, and in naming them over, smiled at her own indecision.

The giving herself to such fancies was exactly what the Prince intended; only he was to be the central figure throughout. Whether in the palace or on the ship, she was to think of him alone, and always as the author of the splendor and the happiness. Of almost any other person we would speak compassionately; but he had lived long enough to know better than dream so childishly—long enough at least to know there is a law for everything except the vagaries of a girl scarcely sixteen.

After all, however, if his scheme was purely selfish, perhaps it may be pleasing to the philosophers who insist that relations cannot exist without carrying along with them their own balance of compensations, to hear how Lael filled the regal prospect set before her with visions in which Sergius, young, fair, tall and beautiful, was the hero, and the Prince only a paternal

contributor. If the latter led her by the hand here and there, Sergius went with them so close behind she could hear his feet along the marble, and in the voyages she took, he was always a passenger.

The trial of the third day proved too much for the prisoner. The weather was delightfully clear and warm, and in the afternoon she fell to thinking of the promenade on the wall by the Bucoleon, and of the waftures over the Sea from the Asian Olympus. They were sweet in her remembrance, and the longing for them was stronger of a hope the presence of which she scarcely admitted to herself—a hope of meeting Sergius. She wanted to ask him if the bear–tender at the fete could have been the Greek. Often as she thought of that odious creature with her fan, she blushed, and feared Sergius might seriously misunderstand her.

About three o'clock she ordered her chair brought to father Uel's door at exactly four, having first dutifully run over the conditions the Prince had imposed upon her. Uel was too busy to be her escort. Syama, if he went, would be no protection; but she would return early. To be certain, she made a calculation. It would take about half an hour to get to the wall; the sun would set soon after seven; by starting home at six she could have fully an hour and a half for the airing, which meant a possible hour and a half with Sergius.

At four o'clock the sedan was set down before the merchant's house, and, for a reason presently apparent, the reader to whom vehicles of the kind are unfamiliar is advised to acquaint himself somewhat thoroughly with them. In idea, as heretofore observed, this one was a box constructed with a seat for a single passenger; a door in front allowed exit and entrance; besides the window in the door, there was a smaller opening on each side. For portage, it was affixed centrally and in an upright position to two long poles; these, a porter in front and another behind grasped at the ends, easing the burden by straps passed over the shoulders. The box was high enough for the passenger to stand in it.

Lest this plain description should impose an erroneous idea of the appearance of the carriage, we again advert to its upholstery in silk–velvet orange–tinted; to the cushions covering the seat; to the lace curtaining the

windows in a manner to permit view from within while screening the occupant from obtrusive eyes without; and to the elaborate decoration of the exterior, literally a mosaic of vari–colored woods, mother–of–pearl and gold, the latter in lines and flourishes. In fine, to such a pitch of gorgeousness had the Prince designed the chair, intending the public should receive it as an attestation of his love for the child to whom it was specially set apart, that it became a notoriety and avouched its ownership everywhere in the city.

The reader would do well in the next place to give a glance at the men who brought the chair to the door—two burly fellows, broad–faced, shock–headed, small–eyed, sandalled, clad in semi–turbans, gray shirts, and gray trousers immensely bagged behind—professional porters; for the service demanded skill. A look by one accustomed to the compound of races hived in Constantinople would have determined them Bulgarians in extraction, and subjects of the Sultan by right of recent conquest. They had settled upon the Prince of India in a kind of retainership. As the chair belonged to Lael, from long employment as carriers they belonged to the chair. Their patron dealt very liberally with them, and for that reason had confidence in their honesty and faithfulness. That they should have pride in the service, he dressed them in a livery. On this occasion, however, they presented themselves in every–day costume—a circumstance which would not have escaped the Prince, or Uel, or Syama.

The only witness of the departure was the governess, who came out and affectionately settled her charge in the chair, and heard her name the streets which the Bulgarians were to pursue, all of them amongst the most frequented of the city. Gazing at her through the window the moment the chair was raised, she thought Lael never appeared lovelier and was herself pleased and lulled with the words she received at parting:

"I will be home before sunset."

The carriers in going followed instructions, except that upon arrival at the Hippodrome, observing it already in possession of a concourse of people waiting for the Epicureans, they passed around the enormous pile, and entered the imperial gardens by a gate north of Sancta Sophia.

Lael found the promenade thronged with habitues, and falling into the current moving toward Point Serail, she permitted her chair to become part of it; after which she was borne backward and forward from the Serail to the Port of Julian, stopping occasionally to gaze at the Isles of the Princes seemingly afloat and drifting through the purple haze of the distance.

Where, she persisted in asking herself, is Sergius? Lest he might pass unobserved, she kept the curtains of all the windows aside, and every long gown and tall hat she beheld set her heart to fluttering. Her eagerness to meet the monk at length absorbed her.

The sun marked five o'clock—then half after five—then, in more rapid declension, six, and still she went pendulously to and fro along the wall—six o'clock, the hour for starting home; but she had not seen Sergius. On land the shadows were lengthening rapidly; over the sea, the brightness was dulling, and the air perceptibly freshening. She awoke finally to the passage of time, and giving up the hope which had been holding her to the promenade, reluctantly bade the carriers take her home. "Shall we go by the streets we came?" the forward man asked, respectfully.

"Yes," she returned.

Then, as he closed the door, she was startled by noticing the promenade almost deserted; the going and coming were no longer in two decided currents; groups had given place to individual loiterers. These things she noticed, but not the glance the porters threw to each other telegraphic of some understanding between them.

At the foot of the stairs descending the wall she rapped on the front window.

"Make haste," she said, to the leading man; "make haste, and take the nearest way."

This, it will be perceived, left him to choose the route in return, and he halted long enough to again telegraph his companion by look and nod.

Between the eastern front of the Bucoleon and the sea–wall the entire space was a garden. From the wall the ascent to the considerable plateau

crowned by the famous buildings was made easy by four graceful terraces, irregular in width, and provided with zigzag roads securely paved.

Roses and lilies were not the only products of the terraces; vines and trees of delicate leafage and limited growth flourished upon them in artistic arrangement. Here and there were statues and lofty pillars, and fountains in the open, and fountains under tasteful pavilions, planted advantageously at the angles. Except where the trees and shrubbery formed groups dense enough to serve as obstructions, the wall commanded the whole slope. Time was when all this loveliness was jealously guarded for the lords and ladies of the court; but when Blacherne became the Very High Residence the Bucoleon lapsed to the public. His Majesty maintained it; the people enjoyed it.

Following the zigzags, the carriers mounted two of the terraces without meeting a soul. The garden was deserted. Hastening on, they turned the Y at the beginning of the third terrace. A hundred or more yards along the latter there was a copse of oleander and luxuriant filbert bushes over–ridden by fig trees. As the sedan drew near this obstruction, its bearers flung quick glances above and below them, and along the wall, and descrying another sedan off a little distance but descending toward them, they quickened their pace as if to pass the copse first. In the midst of it, at the exact point where the view from every direction was cut off, the man in the rear stumbled, struggled to recover himself, then fell flat. His ends of the poles struck the pavement with a crash—the chair toppled backward—Lael screamed. The leader slipped the strap from his shoulder, and righted the carriage by letting it go to the ground, floor down. He then opened the door.

"Do not be scared," he said to Lael, whose impulse was to scramble out. "Keep your seat—my comrade has had a fall—that is nothing—keep your seat. I will get him up, and we will be going on in a minute."

Lael became calm.

The man walked briskly around, and assisted his partner to his feet. There was a hurried consultation between them, of which the passenger

heard only the voices. Presently they both came to the door, looking much mortified.

"The accident is more than I thought," the leader said, humbly.

By this time the chill of the first fear was over with Lael, and she asked: "Can we go on?"

"If the Princess can walk—yes."

She turned pale.

"What is it? Why must I walk?"

"Our right–hand pole is broken, and we have nothing to tie it with."

And the other man added: "If we only had a rope!"

Now the mishap was not uncommon, and remembering the fact, Lael grew cooler, and bethought herself of the silken scarf about her waist. To take it off was the work of a moment.

"Here," she said, rather pleased at her presence of mind; "you can make a rope of this."

They took the scarf, and busied themselves, she thought, trying to bandage the fractured shaft. Again they stood before the door.

"We have done the best we can. The pole will hold the chair, but not with the Princess. She must walk—there is nothing else for her."

Thereupon the assistant interposed a suggestion: "One of us can go for another chair, and overtake the Princess before she reaches the gate."

This was plausible, and Lael stepped forth. She sought the sun first; the palace hid it, yet she was cheered by its last rays redly enlivening the heights of Scutari across the Bosphorus, and felicitated herself thinking it still possible to get home before the night was completely fallen.

"Yes, one of you may seek another"—

That instant the sedan her porters had descried before they entered the copse caught her eyes. Doubt, fear, suspicion vanished; her face brightened: "A chair! A chair!—and no one in it!" she cried, with the vivacity of a child. "Bring it here, and let us be gone."

The carriage so heartily welcomed was of the ordinary class, and the carriers were poorly clad, hard–featured men, but stout and well trained. They came at call.

"Where are you going?"

"To the wall."

"Are you engaged?"

"No, we hoped to find some one belated there."

"Do you know Uel the merchant?"

"We have heard of him. He has a stall in the market, and deals in diamonds."

"Do you know where his house is?"

"On the street from St. Peter's Gate, under the church by the old cistern."

"We have a passenger here, his daughter, and want you to carry her home. One of our poles is broken."

"Will she pay us our price?"

"How much do you want?"

Here Lael interposed: "Stand not on the price. My father will pay whatever they demand."

The Bulgarians seemed to consider a moment.

"It is the best we can do," the leader said.

"Yes, the very best," the other returned.

Thereupon the first one went to the new sedan, and opened the door. "If the Princess will take seat," he said, respectfully, "we will pick up, and follow close after her."

Lael stepped in, saying as the door closed upon her: "Make haste, for the night is near."

The strangers without further ado faced about, and started up the road.

"Wait, wait," she heard her old leader call out.

There was a silence during which she imagined the Bulgarians were adjusting the straps upon their shoulders; then there came a quick: "Now

go, and hurry, or we will pass you."

These were the last words she heard from them, for the new men put themselves in motion. She missed the cushions of her own carriage, but was content—she was returning home, and going fast. This latter she judged by the slide and shuffle of the loose–sandalled feet under her, and the responsive springing of the poles.

The reaction of spirit which overtook her was simply the swing of nature back to its normal lightness. She ceased thinking of the accident, except as an excuse for the delay to which she had been subjected. She was glad the Prince's old retainer had escaped without injury. There was no window back through which she could look, yet she fancied she heard the feet of the faithful Bulgarians; they said nothing, therefore everything was proceeding well. Now and then she peered out through the side windows to notice the deepening of the shades of evening. Once a temporary darkness filled the narrow box, but it gave her no uneasiness— the men were passing out of the garden through a covered gate. Now they were in a street, and the travelling plain.

Thus assured and tranquil, maiden–like, she again fell to thinking of Sergius. Where could he have been? What kept him from the promenade? He might have known she would be there. Was the Hegumen so exacting? Old people are always forgetting they cannot make young people old like themselves; and it was so inconvenient, especially now she wanted to hear of the bear tender. Then she adverted to the monk more directly. How tall he was! How noble and good of face! And his religion—she wished ever so quietly that he could be brought over to the Judean faith—she wished it, but did not ask herself why. To say truth, there was a great deal more feeling in undertone, as it were, touching these points than thought; and while she kept it going, the carriers forgot not to be swift, nor did the night tarry.

Suddenly there was an awakening. From twilight deeply shaded, she passed into utter darkness. While, with her face to a window, she tried to see where she was and make out what had happened, the chair stopped, and

next moment was let drop to the ground. The jar and the blank blackness about renewed her fears, and she called out:

"What is the matter? Where are we? This is not my father Uel's."

And what time an answer should have been forthcoming had there been good faith and honesty in the situation, she heard a rush of feet which had every likeness to a precipitate flight, and then a banging noise, like the slamming to of a ponderous door.

She had time to think of the wisdom of her father, the Prince of India, and of her own wilfulness—time to think of the Greek—time to call once on Sergius—then a flutter of consciousness—an agony of fright—and it was as if she died.

CHAPTER XX

THE SILHOUETTE OF A CRIME

A genius thoroughly wicked—such was Demedes.

Quick to see the disgust the young men of Constantinople had fallen into for the disputes their elders were indulging about the Churches, he proposed that they should discard religion, and reinstate philosophy; and at their request he formulated the following:

"Nature is the lawgiver; the happiness of man is the primary object of Nature: hence for youth, Pleasure; for old age, Repentance and Piety, the life hereafter being a respectable conjecture."

The principles thus tersely stated were eagerly adopted, and going forward with his scheme, it may be said the Academy was his design, and its organization his work. In recognition of his superior abilities, the grateful Academicians elected him their High Priest.

We have seen how the public received the motto of the society. Patience, Courage, Judgment looked fair and disclosed nothing wrong; but there was an important reservation to it really the only secret observed. This was the motto in full, known only to the initiated—Patience, Courage, Judgment *in the pursuit of Pleasure*.

From the hour of his installation as High Priest, Demedes was consumed by an ambition to illustrate the motto in its entirety, by doing something which should develop the three virtues in connection with unheard of daring and originality.

It is to be added here that to his own fortune, he had now the treasury of the Academy to draw upon, and it was full. In other words, he had ample means to carry out any project his *judgment* might approve.

He pondered the matter long. One day Lael chanced to fall under his observation. She was beautiful and the town talk. Here, he thought, was a

subject worth studying, and speedily two mysteries presented themselves to him: Who was the Prince of India? And what was her true relationship to the Prince?

We pass over his resorts in unravelling the mysteries; they were many and cunning, and thoroughly tried the first virtue of the Academical motto; still the sum of his finding with respect to the Prince was a mere theory—he was a Jew and rich—beyond this Demedes took nothing for his pains.

He proceeded next to investigate Lael. She too was of Jewish origin, but unlike other Jewesses, wonderful to say, she had two fathers, the diamond merchant and the Prince of India.

Nothing better could be asked—so his judgment, the third virtue of the motto, decreed. In Byzantine opinion, Jews were socially outside decent regard. In brief, if he should pursue the girl to her ruin, there was little to fear from an appeal by either of her fathers to the authorities. Exile might be the extremest penalty of discovery.

He began operations by putting into circulation the calumny, too infamous for repetition, with which we have seen him attempt to poison Sergius. Robbing the victim of character would deprive her of sympathy, and that, in the event of failure, would be a half defence for himself with the public.

He gave himself next to finding what to do with the little Princess, as he termed her. All his schemes respecting her fell short in that they lacked originality. At last the story of the Plague of Crime, stumbled on in the library of the St. James', furnished a suggestion novel, if not original, and he accepted it.

Proceeding systematically, he first examined the cistern, paddling through it in a boat with a flambeau at the bow. He sounded the depth of the water, counted the pillars, and measured the spaces between them; he tested the purity of the air; and when the reconnoissance was through, he laughed at the simplicity of the idea, and embodied his decision in a saying eminently becoming his philosophic character—the best of every new thing is that it was once old.

Next he reduced the affair to its elements. He must steal her—such was the deed in simplest term—and he must have assistants, but prudence whispered just as few of them as possible. He commenced a list, heading it with the keeper of the cistern, whom he found poor, necessitous, and anxious to better his condition. Upon a payment received, that worthy became warmly interested, and surprised his employer with suggestions of practical utility.

Coming then to the abduction, he undertook a study of her daily life, hoping it would disclose something available. A second name was thereupon entered in his list of accomplices.

One day a beggar with sore eyes and a foot swollen with elephantiasis—an awful object to sight—set a stool in an angle of the street a few doors from Uel's house; and thenceforward the girl's every appearance was communicated to Demedes, who never forgot the great jump of heart with which he heard of the gorgeous chair presented her by the Prince, and of the visit she forthwith made to the wall of the Bucoleon.

Soon as he satisfied himself that the Bulgarians were in the Prince's pay, he sounded them. They too were willing to permit him to make them comfortable the remainder of their days, especially as, after the betrayal asked of them, they had only to take boat to the Turkish side of the Bosphorus, beyond pursuit and demand. His list of assistants was then increased to four.

Now indeed the game seemed secure, and he prepared for the hour which was to bring the Jewess to him.

The keeper of the cistern was the solitary occupant of a house built round a small court from which a flight of stone steps admitted to the darkened water. He had a felicitous turn for mechanics, and undertook the building of a raft with commodious rooms on it. Demedes went with him to select a place of anchorage, and afterward planned the structure to fit between four of the pillars in form thus:

[Illustration]

Seeing the design on paper, Demedes smiled—it was so like a cross; the part in lines being the landing, and the rest a room divisible at pleasure

into three rooms. A boat was provided for communication, and to keep it hid from visitors, a cord was fixed to a pillar off in the darkness beyond ken, helped though it might be by torches; so standing on the stone steps, one could draw the vessel to and fro, exactly as a flag is hoisted or lowered on a staff.

The work took a long time, but was at last finished. The High Priest of the Epicureans came meantime to have something akin to tender feeling for his intended victim. He indulged many florid dreams of when she should grace his bower in the Imperial Cistern; and as the time of her detention might peradventure extend into months, he vowed to enrich the bower until the most wilful spirit would settle into contentment.

Neither the money nor the time spent in this part of the preparation was begrudged; on the contrary, Demedes took delight in the occupation; it was exercise for ingenuity, taste, and judgment, always a pleasure to such as possess the qualities. In fact, the whole way through he likened himself to a bird building a nest for its mate.

After all, however, the part of the project most troublesome of arrangement by the schemer, was getting the Princess into the cistern keeper's house—that is, without noise, scuffle, witnesses, or a clew left behind. To this he gave more hours of reflection than to the rest altogether. The method we have seen executed was decided upon when he arrived at two conclusions; that the attempt was most likely to succeed in the garden of the Bucoleon, and that the Princess must be lured from her chair into another less conspicuous and not so well known. Greatly to his regret, but of necessity, he then saw himself compelled to increase his list of accessories to six. Yet he derived peace remembering none of them, with exception of the keeper, knew aught of the affair beyond their immediate connection with it. The porters, for instance, who dropped the unfortunate and fled, leaving her in the sedan to intents dead, had not the slightest idea of what was to become of her afterwards.

The conjunctions needful to success in the enterprise were numerous; yet the Greek accepted the waiting they put him to as a trial of the Patience to which the motto pledged him. He believed in being ready. When the house

was built and furnished, he drilled the Bulgarians with such particularity that the scene in the garden may be said to have been literally to order. Probably the nearest approach to the mythical sixth sense is the power of casting one's mind forward to a coming event, and arranging its occurrence; and whether some have it a gift of nature, while others derive it from cultivation, this much is certain—without it, no man will ever create anything originally.

Now, if the reader pleases, Demedes was too liberally endowed with the faculty, trait or sense of which we have just spoken to permit the sedan to be broken; such an accident would have been very inconvenient at the critical moment succeeding the exchange of chairs. The prompter ever at the elbow of a bad man instructed him that, aside from what the Prince of India could not do, it was in his power to arouse the city, and set it going hue and cry; and then the carriage, rich, glittering, and known to so many, would draw pursuit, like a flaming torch at night. So it occurred to Demedes, the main object being to conceal the going to the cistern keeper's, why not use the sedan to deceive the pursuers? He scored the idea with an exultant laugh.

Returning now to the narrative of the enactment, directly the strange porters moved out of the copse with their unsuspecting passenger, the Bulgarians slung the poles to their shoulders, and followed up the zigzag to the Y of the fourth terrace; there they turned, and retraced their steps to the promenade; whence, after reaching Point Serail, they doubled on their track, descended the wall, traversed the garden, and, passing the gate by which they came, paraded their empty burden around the Hippodrome and down a thronged street. And again doubling, they returned to the wall, and finding it forsaken, and the night having fallen, they abandoned the chair at a spot where the water on the seaward side was deep and favorable for whatever violence theory might require. In the course of this progress they were met by numberless people, many of whom stopped to observe the gay turnout, doubting not that the little Princess was within directing its movements. Finally, their task thoroughly done, the Bulgarians hurried to where a boat was in readiness, and crossing to Scutari, lost themselves in the growing dominions of their rightful Lord, the Sultan.

One casually reading this silhouette of a crime in act is likely to rest here, thinking there was nothing more possible of doing either to forward the deed or facilitate the escape of those engaged in it; yet Demedes was not content. There were who had heard him talk of the girl—who knew she had been much in his thought—to whom he had furnished ground for suspecting him of following her with evil intent—Sergius amongst others. In a word, he saw a necessity for averting attention from himself in the connection. Here also his wit was willing and helpful. The moment the myrmidon dropped from the portico with news that the Princess was out in her chair unattended, he decided she was proceeding to the wall.

"The gods are mindful of me!" he said, his blood leaping quick. "Now is the time ripe, and the opportunity come!"

Looking at the sun, he fixed the hour, and reflected:

"Five o'clock—she is on the wall. Six o'clock—she is still there. Half after six—making up her mind to go home. Oh, but the air will be sweet, and the sea lovely! Seven o'clock—she gives order, and the Bulgarians signal my men on the fourth terrace. Pray Heaven the Russian keep to his prayers or stay hearkening for my father's bell!… Here am I seen of these thousands. Later on—about the time she forsakes the wall—my presence shall be notorious along the streets from the Temple to Blacherne. Then what if the monk talks? May the fiend pave his path with stumbling–blocks and breaknecks! The city will not discredit its own eyes."

The Epicureans, returning from the Hippodrome, reached their Temple about half after five o'clock. The dispersal occupied another hour; shortly after, the regalia having been put away, and the tripods and banners stored, Demedes called to his mounted assistants:

"My brothers, we have worked hard, but the sowing has been bounteous and well done. Philosophy in flowers, religion in sackcloth—that is the comparison we have given the city. There will be no end to our harvest. To–morrow our doors open to stay open. To–day I have one further service for you. To your horses and ride with me to the gate of Blacherne. We may meet the Emperor."

They answered him shouting: "Live the Emperor!"

"Yes," cried Demedes, when the cheering was over, "by this time he should be tired of the priests; and what is that but the change of heart needful to an Epicurean?"

Laughing and joking, they mounted, eight of them, in flowers as when in the Hippodrome. The sun was going down, but the streets were yet bright with day. It was the hour when balconies overhanging the narrow thoroughfares were crowded with women and children, and the doors beset with servants—the hour Byzantine gossips were abroad filling and unfilling their budgets. How the wooden houses trembled while the cavalcade went galloping by! What thousands of bright eyes peered down upon the cavaliers, attracted by the shouting and laughter! Now and then some person would be a little late in attempting to cross before him; then with what grace Demedes would spur after him, his bow and bowstring for whip! And how the spectators shrieked with delight when he overtook the culprit, and wore the flowers out flogging him! And when a balcony was low, and illuminated with a face fairer than common, how the gallant young riders plucked roses from their helms and shields, and tossed them in shouting:

"Largesse, Lady—largesse of thy smiles!"

"Look again! Another rose for another look!"

"From the brave to the fair!"

Thus to the gate of Blacherne. There they drew up, and saluted the officer of the guard, and cheered: "Live Constantine! To the good Emperor, long life!"

All the way Demedes rode with lifted visor. Returning through the twilight, earlier in the close streets than in the open, he led his company by the houses of Uel and the Prince of India. Something might be learned of what was going on with the little Princess by what was going on there; and the many persons he saw in the street signified alarm and commotion.

"Ho, here!" he shouted, drawing rein. "What does this mean? Somebody dead or dying?"

"Uel, the master of the house, is afraid for his child. She should have been home before sundown. He is sending friends out to look for her."

There was a whole story in the answer, and the conspirator repressed a cry of triumph, and rode on.

CHAPTER XXI

SERGIUS LEARNS A NEW LESSON

Syama, always thoughtful, took care of the treasure brought from Plati, and standing by the door watched his master through the night, wondering what the outcome of his agitation would be.

It were useless attempting to describe how the gloomy soul of the Jew exercised itself. His now ungovernable passions ran riot within him. He who had seen so much of life, who had made history as the loomsmen of Bokhara make carpets, who dealt with kings and kingdoms, and the superlatives of every kind canonized in the human imagination—he to be so demeaned! Yet it was not the disrespect to himself personally that did the keenest stinging, nor even the enmity of Heaven denying him the love permitted every other creature, bird, beast, crawling reptile, monster of the sea—these were as the ruffling of the weather feathers of a fighting eagle, compared with the torture he endured from consciousness of impotency to punish the wrongdoers as he would like to punish them.

That Lael was immured somewhere in the city, he doubted not; and he would find her, for what door could stand shut against knocking by a hand with money in it? But might it not be too late? The flower he could recover, but the fragrance and purity of bloom—what of them? How his breast enlarged and shrank under the electric touch of that idea! The devil who did the deed might escape him, for hell was vast and deep; yet the city remained, even the Byzantium ancient of days like himself, and he would hold it a hostage for the safe return of his Gul Bahar.

All the night long he walked without pause; it seemed unending to him; at length the faintest rosy tint, a reflection from morning's palette of splendor, lodged on the glass of his eastern window, and woke him from his misery. At the door he found Syama.

"Syama," he said, kindly, "bring me the little case which has in it my choicest drugs."

It was brought him, an oblong gold box encrusted with brilliants. Opening it, he found a spatula of fine silver on a crystal lid, and under the lid, in compartments, pellets differently colored, one of which he selected, and dropped in his throat.

"There, put it back," he said, returning the box to Syama, who went out with it. Looking then at the brightness brighter growing through the window, "Welcome," he continued, speaking to the day as it were a person: "Thou wert slow coming, yet welcome. I am ready for this new labor imposed on me, and shall not rest, or sleep, or hunger, or thirst until it is done. Thou shalt see I have not lived fourteen centuries for nothing; that in a hunt for vengeance I have not lost my cunning. I will give them till thou hast twice run thy course; then, if they bring her not, they will find the God they worship once more the Lord God of Israel."

Syama returned.

"Thou art a faithful man, Syama, and I love thee. Get me a cup of the Cipango leaves—no bread, the cup alone."

While waiting, the Prince continued his silent walk; but when the tea was brought, he said: "Good! It shall go after the meat of the poppies"—adding to Syama—"While I drink, do thou seek Uel, and bring him to me."

When the son of Jahdai entered, the Prince looked at him a moment, and asked: "Hast thou word of her?"

"Not a word, not one word," and with the reply the merchant's face sunk until the chin rested on his breast. The hopelessness observable in the voice, joined to the signs of suffering apparent in the manner, was irresistibly touching. Another instant, then the elder advanced to him, and took his hand.

"We are brothers," he said, with exceeding gentleness. "She was our child—ours—thine, yet mine. She loved us both. We loved her, thou not more, I not less. She went not willingly from us; we know that much, because we know she loved us, me not less, thee not more. A pitfall was

digged for her. Let us find it. She is calling for us from the bottom—I hear her—now thy name, now mine—and there is no time to be lost. Wilt thou do as I say?"

"You are strong, and I weak; be it entirely as you say," Uel answered, without looking up, for there were tears in his eyes, and a great groan growing in his throat.

"Well, see thou now. We will find the child, be the pit ever so deep; but—it is well bethinking—we may not find her the undefiled she was, or we may find her dead. I believe she had a spirit to prefer death to dishonor—but dead or dishonored, wilt thou merge thy interest in her into mine?"

"Yes."

"I alone am to decide then what best becomes us to do. Is it agreed?"

"Yes—such faith have I in you."

"Oh, but understand thee, son of Jahdai! I speak not merely as a father, but as an Israelite."

Uel looked at the speaker's face, and was startled. The calm voice, low and evenly toned, to which he had been listening, had not prepared him for the livid pursing he saw under the eyes, and the pupils lurid and unnaturally dilated—effects we know, good reader, of the meat of the poppies assisted by the friendly Cipango leaves. Yet the merchant replied, strong in the other's strength: "Am not I, too, an Israelite?—Only do not take her from me."

"Fear not. Now, son of Jahdai, let us to work. Let us first find our pretty child."

Again Uel was astonished. The countenance was bright and beaming with confidence. A world of energy seemed to have taken possession of the man. He looked inspired—looked as if a tap of his finger could fetch the extremities of the continent rolling like a carpet to his feet.

"Go now, my brother Uel, and bring hither all the clerks in the market."

"All of them—all? Consider the expense."

"Nay, son of Jahdai, be thou a true Israelite. In trade, this for that, consider the profits and stand on them closely, getting all thou canst. But

here is no trade—here is honor—our honor—thine, mine. Shall a Christian beat us, and wear the virtue of our daughter as it were a leman's favor? No, by Abraham—by the mother of Israel"—a returning surge of passion blackened his face again, and quickened his speech—"by Rachael and Sarah, and all the God–loving asleep in Hebron, in this cause our money shall flow like water—even as the Euphrates in swollen tide goes bellowing to the sea, it shall flow. I will fill the mouths and eyes as well as the pockets of this Byzantium with it, until there shall not be a dune on the beach, a cranny in the wall, a rathole in its accursed seven hills unexamined. Yes, the say is mine—so thou didst agree—deny it not! Bid the clerks come, and quickly—only see to it that each brings his writing material, and a piece of paper large as his two hands. This house for their assemblage. Haste. Time flies—and from the pit, out of the shadows in the bottom of the pit, I hear the voice of Lael calling now to thee, now to me."

Uel was not deficient in strength of purpose, nor for that matter in judgment; he went and in haste; and the clerks flocked to the Prince, and wrote at his dictation. Before half the breakfasts in the city were eaten, vacant places at the church doors, the cheeks of all the gates, and the fronts of houses blazed with handbills, each with a reader before it proclaiming to listening groups:

"BYZANTINES!"

"FATHERS AND MOTHERS OF BYZANTIUM!"

"Last evening the daughter of Uel the merchant, a child of sixteen, small in stature, with dark hair and eyes, and fair to see, was set upon in the garden of the Bucoleon, and stolen out of her sedan chair. Neither she, nor the Bulgarians carrying her have been heard of since."

"REWARDS."

"Out of love of the child, whose name was Lael, I will pay him who returns her to me living or dead"

"6,000 BEZANTS IN GOLD."

"And to him who brings me the abductor, or the name of any one engaged in the crime, with proof to convict him,"

"5,000 BEZANTS IN GOLD."

"Inquire of me at Uel's stall in the Market."

"PRINCE OF INDIA."

Thus the Jew began his campaign of discovery, meaning to follow it up with punishment first, and then vengeance, the latter in conditional mood.

Let us not stop to ask about motives. This much is certain, the city arose with one mind. Such a running here and there had never been known, except possibly the times enemies in force sat down before the gates. The walls landwardly by the sea and harbor, and the towers of the walls above and below; old houses whose solitariness and decay were suspicious; new houses and their cellars; churches from crypt to pulpit and gallery; barracks and magazines, even the baker's ovens attached to them; the wharves and vessels tied up and the ships at anchor—all underwent a search. Hunting parties invaded the woods. Scorpions were unnested, and bats and owls made unhappy by daylight where daylight had never been before. Convents and monasteries were not exempt. The sea was dragged, and the great moat from the Golden Gate to the Cynegion raked for traces of a new–made grave. Nor less were the cemeteries overhauled, and tombs and sarcophagi opened, and Saints' Rests dug into and profaned. In short, but one property in Byzantium was respected—that of the Emperor. By noon the excitement had crossed to Galata, and was at high tide in the Isles of the Princes. Such power was there in the offer of bezants in gold—six thousand for the girl, five thousand for one of her captors—singly, a fortune to stir the cupidity of a Duke—together, enough to enlist a King in the work. And everywhere the two questions—Has she been found? and who is the Prince of India? Poor Uel had not space to think of his loss or yield to sorrow; the questions kept him so busy.

It must not be supposed now in this all but universal search, nobody thought of the public cisterns. They were visited. Frequently through the day parties followed each other to the Imperial reservoir; but the keeper was always in his place, cool, wary, and prepared for them. He kept open door and offered no hindrance to inspection of his house. To interrogators he gave ready replies:

"I was at home last night from sunset to sunrise. At dark I closed up, and no one could have come in afterwards without my seeing him… I know the chair of the merchant's daughter. It is the finest in the city. The Bulgarians have carried it past my house, but they never stopped… Oh, yes, you are welcome to do with the cistern what you please. There is the doorway to the court, and in the court is the descent to the water." Sometimes he would treat the subject facetiously: "If the girl were here, I should know it, and if I knew it—ha, ha, ha!—are bezants in gold by the thousand more precious to you than to me? Do you think I too would not like to be rich?—I who live doggedly on three noumias, helped now and then by scanty palm–salves from travellers?"

This treatment was successful. One party did insist on going beyond the court. They descended the steps about half way, looked at the great gray pillars in ghostly rows receding off into a blackness of silence thick with damps and cellar smells, each a reminder of contagion; then at the motionless opaque water, into which the pillars sank to an unknown depth: and they shivered, and cried: "Ugh! how cold and ugly!" and hastened to get out.

Undoubtedly appearances helped save the ancient cistern from examination; yet there were other influences to the same end. Its vastness was a deterrent. A thorough survey required organization and expensive means, such as torches, boats, fishing tongs and drag–nets; and why scour it at all, if not thoroughly and over every inch? Well, well—such was the decision—the trouble is great, and the uncertainty greater. Another class was restrained by a sentiment possibly the oldest and most general amongst men; that which casts a spell of sanctity around wells and springs, and stays the hand about to toss an impurity into a running stream; which impels the North American Indian to replace the gourd, and the Bedouin to spare the bucket for the next comer, though an enemy. In other words, the cistern was in daily use.

One can imagine the scene at the Prince's through the day. To bring a familiar term into service, his house was headquarters.

About eight o'clock the sedan was brought home empty, and without a sign of defacement inside or out. It told no tale.

Noon, and still no clew.

In the afternoon there was an observable cessation of vigor in the quest. Thousands broke off, and went about their ordinary business, giving the reason.

"Which way now?" would be asked them.

"Home."

"What! Has she been found?"

"Not that we know."

"Ah, you have given up."

"Yes."

"Why?"

"We are satisfied the Bulgarians stole the girl. The Turks have her; and now for a third part of either of the rewards he offers, the Prince of India, whoever he is, can ransom her. He will have plenty of time. There is no such thing as haste in a harem."

By lamplighting in the evening, the capital resumed its customary quiet, and of the turmoil of the day, the rush and eager halloo, the promiscuous delving into secret places, and upturning of things strange and suspicious, there remained nothing but a vast regret—vast in the collective sense—for the rewards lost.

Quiet crept into headquarters. To the Prince's insistence that the hunt go on, he was advised to prosecute the inquest on the other side of the Bosphorus. The argument presented him was plausible; either—thus it ran—the Bulgarians carried the child away with them or she was taken from them. They were stout men, yet there is no sign of a struggle. If they were killed, we should find their bodies; if they are alive and innocent, why are they not here? They would be entitled to the rewards along with the best of us.

Seeing the drift, the Prince refrained from debate. He only looked more grim and determined. When the house was cleared, he took the floor again fiercely restless as before. Later on Uel came in, tired, spirit–worn, and apparently in the last stage of despondency.

"Well, son of Jahdai, my poor brother," said the Prince, much moved, and speaking tenderly. "It is night, and what bringest thou?"

"Alas! Nothing, except the people say the Bulgarians did it."

"The Bulgarians! Would it were so; for look thee, in their hands she would be safe. Their worst of villany would be a ransom wrung from us. Ah, no! They might have been drawn into the conspiracy; but take her, they did not. How could they have passed the gates unseen? The night was against them. And besides, they have not the soul to devise or dare the deed. This is no common criminal, my brother. When he is found—and he will be, or hell hath entered into partnership with him—thou wilt see a Greek of title, bold from breeding and association, behind him an influence to guarantee him against the law and the Emperor. Of the classes in Byzantium to–day, who are the kings? Who but the monks? And here is a morsel of wisdom, true, else my experience is a delusion: In decaying and half–organized states, the boldest in defying public opinion are they who have the most to do in making it."

"I do not understand you," Uel interposed.

"Thou art right, my brother. I know not why I am arguing; yet I ought not to leave thee in the dark now; therefore I will go a step further. Thou art a Jew—not a Hebrew, or an Israelite, mark thee—but in the contemptuous Gentile sense, a Jew. She, our gentle Gul–Bahar, hath her beating of heart from blood thou gavest her. I also am a Jew. Now, of the classes in Byzantium, which is it by whom hate of Jews is the article of religion most faithfully practised? Think if it be not the same from whose shops proceed the right and wrong of the time—the same I myself scarce three days gone saw insult and mortify the man they chose Emperor, and not privately, in the depths of a monastery or chapel, but publicly, his court present… Ah, now thou seest my meaning! In plainest speech, my brother, when he who invented this crime is set down before us, look not for a

soldier, or a sailor, or one of thy occupation—look not for a beggar, or a laborer, or an Islamite—look rather for a Greek, with a right from relationship near or remote to summon the whole priestly craft to hold up his hands against us, Jews that we are. But I am not discouraged. I shall find her, and the titled outlaw who stole her. Or—but threats now are idle. They shall have tomorrow to bring her home. I pray pardon for keeping thee from rest and sleep. Go now. In the morning betimes see thou that the clerks come back to me here. I will have need of them again, for"—he mused a moment— "yes, if that I purpose must be, then, the worst betiding us, they shall not say I was hard and merciless, and cut their chances scant."

Uel was at the door going, when the Prince called him back.

"Wait—I do not need rest. Thou dost. Is Syama there?"

"Yes."

"Send him to me."

When the slave was come, "Go," the master said, "and bring me the golden case."

And when it was brought, he took out a pellet, and gave it to Uel.

"There—take it, and thou shalt sleep sound as the dead, and have never a dream—sound, yet healthfully. To–morrow we must work. To–morrow," he repeated when Uel was gone—"to–morrow! Till then, eternity."

Let us now shift the scene to the Monastery of the St. James'.

It is eight o'clock in the morning—about the time the empty sedan was being brought to the Prince's house. Sergius had been hearkening for the Hegumen's bell, and at the moment we look in upon him, he is with the venerable superior, helping him to breakfast, if a meal so frugal deserves the name.

The young Russian, it is to be said, retired to his cell immediately upon the conclusion of the Festival of Flowers the evening before. Awaking early, he made personal preparation for the day, and with the Brotherhood in the chapel, performed the matinal breviary services, consisting of lauds, psalms, lections and prayers. Then he took seat by his superior's door. By

and by the bell called him in, and thenceforward he was occupied in the kitchen or at the elder's elbow. In brief, he knew nothing of the occurrence which had so overwhelmed the merchant and the Prince of India.

The Hegumen sat on a broad armless chair, very pale and weak—so poorly, indeed, that the brethren had excused him from chapel duties. Having filled a flagon with water, Sergius was offering it to him, when the door opened without knock, or other warning, and Demedes entered. Moving silently to his father, he stooped, and kissed his hand with an unction which brought a smile to the sunken face.

"God's benison on you, my boy. I was thinking of the airs of Prinkipo or Halki, and that they might help me somewhat; but now you are here, I will put them off. Bring the bench to my right hand, and partake with me, if but to break a crust."

"The crust has the appearance of leaven in it, and you know the party to which I belong. I am not an *azymite*."

There was scarcely an attempt to conceal the sneer with which the young man glanced at the brown loaf gracing the platter on the Hegumen's knees. Seeing then a look of pain on the paternal countenance, he continued: "No, I have had breakfast, and came to see how you are, and to apprise you that the city is being stirred from the foam on top to the dregs at the bottom, all because of an occurrence last evening, so incredible, so strange, so audacious, and so wicked it weakens confidence in society, and almost forces one to look up and wonder if God does not sometimes sleep."

The Hegumen and his attendant were aroused. Both gazed at Demedes looking the same question.

"I hesitate to tell you, my dear father, of the affair, it is so shocking. The chill of the first hearing has not left me. I am excited body and mind, and you know how faithfully I have tried to school myself against excitement—it is unbecoming—only the weak suffer it. Rather than trust myself to the narrative—though as yet there are no details—I plucked a notice from a wall while coming, and as it was the first I had of the news, and contains all I know, I brought it along; and if you care to hear, perhaps our friend

Sergius will kindly give you the contents. His voice is better than mine, and he is perfectly calm."

"Yes, Sergius will read. Give him the paper."

Thereupon Demedes passed to Sergius one of the handbills with which the Prince of India had sown the city. After the first line, the monk began stammering and stumbling; at the close of the first sentence, he stopped. Then he threw a glance at the Greek, and from the gaze with which he was met, he drew understanding and self–control. "I ask thy grace, Father," he said, raising the paper, and looking at the signature. "I am acquainted with Uel the merchant, and with the child said to be stolen. I also know the man whose title is here attached. He calls himself Prince of India, but by what right I cannot say. The circumstance is a great surprise to me; so, with thy pardon, I will try the reading again."

Sergius finished the paper, and returned it to Demedes.

The Hegumen folded his hands, and said: "Oh, the flow of mercy cannot endure forever!"

Then the young men looked at each other.

To be surprised when off guard, is to give our enemy his best opportunity. This was the advantage the Greek then had. He was satisfied with the working of his scheme; yet one dread had disturbed him through the night. What would the Russian do? And when he read the Prince's proclamation, and saw the rewards offered, in amounts undreamt of, he shivered; not, as he told the Hegumen, from horror at the crime; still less from fear that the multitude might blunder on discovery; and least of all from apprehension of betrayal from his assistants, for, with exception of the cistern–keeper, they were all in flight, and a night's journey gone. Be the mass of enemies ever so great, there is always one to inspire us with liveliest concern. Here it was Sergius. He had come so recently into the world—descent from a monastery in the far north was to the metropolitan much like being born again—there was no telling what he might do. Thus moved and uncertain, the conspirator resolved to seek his adversary, if such he were, and boldly try him. In what spirit would he receive the

news? That was the thought behind the gaze Demedes now bent on the unsophisticated pupil of the saintly Father Hilarion.

Sergius returned the look without an effort to hide the pain he really felt. His utmost endeavor was to control his feelings. With no idea of simulation, he wanted time to think. Altogether it would have been impossible for him to have chosen a course more perplexing to Demedes, who found himself driven to his next play.

"You know now," he said to his father, "why I decline to break a crust with you. I must go and help uncover this wicked deed. The rewards are great"—he smiled blandly—"and I should like to win one of them at least—the first one, for I have seen the girl called Lael. She interested me, and I was in danger from her. On one occasion"—he paused to throw a glance to Sergius—"I even made advances to become acquainted with her, but she repulsed me. As the Prince of India says, she was fair to see. I am sure I have your permission to engage in the hunt."

"Go, and God speed you," the Hegumen responded.

"Thank you; yet another request."

He turned to the Russian.

"Now is Sergius here tall, and, if his gown belie him not, stout, and there may be need of muscle as well as spirit; for who can tell where our feet will take us in a game like this, or what or whom we may confront? I ask you to permit him to go with me."

"Nay," said the Hegumen, "I will urge him to go."

Sergius answered simply:

"Not now. I am under penance, and to–day bound to the third breviary prayers. When they are finished, I will gladly go."

"I am disappointed," Demedes rejoined. "But I must make haste."

He kissed the Hegumen's hand and retired; after which, the meal speedily concluded, Sergius gathered the few articles of service on the platter, and raised it, but stopped to say: "After prayers, with your consent, reverend Father, I will take part in this affair."

"Thou hast my consent."

"It may take several days."

"Give thyself all the time required. The errand is of mercy."

And the holy man extended his hand, and Sergius saluted it reverently, and went out.

If the young monastic kept not fast hold of the holy forms prescribed immemorially for the third hour's service, there is little doubt he was forgiven in the higher court before which he was supposed present, for never had he been more nearly shaken out of his better self than by the Prince's proclamation. He had managed to appear composed while under Demedes' observation. In the language of the time, some protecting Saint prompted him to beware of the Greek, and keeping the admonition, he had come well out of the interview; but hardly did the Hegumen's door close behind him before Lael's untoward fate struck him with effect. He hurried to his cell, thinking to recover himself; but it was as if he were pursued by a voice calling him, and directly the voice seemed hers, sharp and piercing from terror. A little later he took to answering the appeal—I hear, but where art thou? His agitation grew until the bell summoned him to the chapel, and the sound was gladdening on account of the companionship it promised. Surely the voice would be lost in the full–toned responses of the brethren. Not so. He heard it even more clearly. Then, to place himself certainly beyond it, he begged an ancient worshipper at his side to loan him his triptych. For once, however, the sorrowful figure of the Christ on the central tablet was of no avail, hold it close as he might; strange to say, the face of the graven image assumed her likeness; so he was worse off than before, for now her suffering look was added to her sorrowful cry.

At last the service was over. Rushing back to his cell he exchanged his black gown for the coarse gray garment with which he had sallied from Bielo–Osero. Folding the veil, and putting it carefully away in his hat, he went forth, a hunter as the multitude were hunters; only, as we shall presently see, his zeal was more lasting than theirs, and he was owner of an invaluable secret.

On the street he heard everywhere of the rewards, and everywhere the question, Has she been found? The population, women and children

included, appeared to have been turned out of their houses. The corners were possessed by them, and it will be easy for readers who have once listened to Greeks in hot debate to fancy how on this occasion they were heard afar. Yet Sergius went his way unobservant of the remarks drawn by the elephantine ears of his outlandish hood, his tall form, and impeded step.

Had one stopped him to ask, Where are you going? it is doubtful if he could have told. He had no plan; he was being pulled along by a pain of heart rather than a purpose—moving somnolently through a light which was also a revelation, for now he knew he loved the lost girl—knew it, not by something past, such as recollections of her sweetness and beauty, but by a sense of present bereavement, an agonizing impulsion, a fierce desire to find the robber, a murderous longing the like of which had never assailed him. The going was nearest an answer he could make to the voice calling him, equivalent to, I am coming.

He sped through the Hippodrome outwalking everybody; then through the enclosure of Sancta Sophia; then down the garden terraces—Oh, that the copse could have told him the chapter it had witnessed!—then up the broad stairway to the promenade, and along it toward Port St. Julian, never pausing until he was at the bench in the angle of the wall from which he had overheard Demedes' story of the Plague of Crime.

Now the bench was not in his mind when he started from the monastery; neither had he thought of it on the way, or of the dark history it had helped him to; in a freak, he took the seat he had formerly occupied, placed his arm along the coping of the parapet, and closed his eyes. And strange to say, the conversation of that day repeated itself almost word for word. Stranger still, it had now a significancy not then observed; and as he listened, he interpreted, and the fever of spirit left him.

About an hour before noon, he arose from the bench like one refreshed by sleep, cool, thoughtful, capable. In the interval he had put off boyishness, and taken on manhood replete with a faculty for worldly thinking that would have alarmed Father Hilarion. In other words, he was seeing things as they were; that bad and good, for instance, were

coexistent, one as much a part of the plan of creation as the other; that religion could only regulate and reform; that the end of days would find good men striving with bad men—in brief, that Demedes was performing the role to which his nature and aptitude assigned him, just as the venerable Hegumen, his father, was feebly essaying a counterpart. Nor was that all. The new ideas to which he had been converted facilitated reflection along the lines of wickedness. In the Plague of Crime, told the second time, he believed he had found what had befallen Lael. Demedes, he remembered, gave the historic episode to convince his protesting friend how easy it would be to steal and dispose of her. The argument pointed to the Imperial cistern as the hiding–place.

Sergius' first prompting was to enlist the aid of the Prince of India, and go straight to the deliverance; but he had arisen from the bench a person very different from a blind lover. Not that his love had cooled—ah, no! But there were things to be done before exposing his secret. Thus, his curiosity had never been strong enough to induce him to look into the cistern. Was it not worth while to assure himself of the possibility of its conversion to the use suspected? He turned, and walked back rapidly—down the stairway, up the terraces, and through the Hippodrome. Suddenly he was struck with the impolicy of presenting himself to the cistern–keeper in his present costume—it would be such a help to identification by Demedes. So he continued on to the monastery, and resumed the black gown and tall hat.

The Hegumen's door, which he had to pass in going out again, served him with another admonition. If Demedes were exposed through his endeavor, what of the father? If, in the conflict certain of precipitation, the latter sided with his son—and what could be more natural?—would not the Brotherhood follow him? How then could he, Sergius, a foreigner, young, and without influence, combat a fraternity powerful in the city and most powerful up at Blacherne?

At this, it must be confessed, the young man's step lost its elasticity; his head sunk visibly, and the love just found was driven to divide its

dominion with a well–grounded practical apprehension. Yet he walked on, out of the gate, and thence in the direction of the cistern.

Arrived there, he surveyed the wooden structure doubtfully. The door was open, and just inside of it the keeper sat stick in hand drumming upon the brick pavement, a man of medium height and rather pleasant demeanor.

"I am a stranger here," Sergius said to him. "The cistern is public, I believe; may I see it?"

"It is public, and you may look at it all you want. The door there at the end of the passage will let you into the court. If you have trouble in finding the stairway down, call me."

Sergius dropped some small coin into the keeper's hand.

The court was paved with yellow Roman brick, and moderately spacious. An oblong curbing in the centre without rails marked the place of descent to the water. Overhead there was nothing to interfere with the fall of light from the blue sky, except that in one corner a shed had been constructed barely sufficient to protect a sedan chair deposited there, its poles on end leant against the wall. Sergius noticed the chair and the poles, then looked down over the curbing into a doorway, and saw four stone steps leading to a platform three or four feet square. Observing a further descent, he went down to the landing, where he paused long enough to be satisfied that the whole stairway was built into the eastern wall of the cistern. The light was already dim. Proceeding carefully, for the stones were slippery, he counted fourteen steps to another landing, the width of the first but quite ten feet long, and slightly submerged with water. Here, as he could go no further, he stopped to look about him.

It is true there was not much to be seen, yet he was at once impressed with a sense of vastness and durability. A dark and waveless sheet lay stretched before him, merging speedily into general blackness. About four yards away and as many apart, two gigantic pillars arose out of the motionless flood stark and ghostly gray. Behind them, suggestive of rows with an aisle between, other pillars were seen, mere upright streaks of uncertain hue fainter growing in the shadowy perspective. Below there was

nothing to arrest a glance. Raising his eyes to the roof above him, out of the semi–obscurity, he presently defined a brick vault springing boldly from the Corinthian capitals of the nearest pillars, and he knew straightway the roof was supported by a system of vaults susceptible of indefinite extension. But how was he, standing on a platform at the eastern edge of the reservoir, mighty in so many senses, to determine its shape, width, length? Stooping he looked down the vista straining his vision, but there was no opposite wall—only darkness and impenetrability. He filled his lungs trying the air, and it was damp but sweet. He stamped with force—there was a rumble in the vault overhead—that was all. He called: "Lael, Lael"—there was no answer, though he listened, his soul in his ears. Therewith he gave over trying to sound the great handmade cavern, and lingered awhile muttering:

"It is possible, it is possible! At the end of this row of pillars"—he made a last vain effort to discover the end—"there may be a house afloat, and she"—he clinched his hands, and shook with a return of murderous passion—"God help her! Nay, God help me! If she is here, as I believe, I will find her."

In the court he again noticed the sedan in the corner.

"I am obliged to you," he said to the keeper by the door. "How old is the cistern?"

"Constantine begun it, and Justinian finished it, they say."

"Is it in use now?"

"They let buckets down through traps in the roof."

"Do you know how large it is?"**[33]**

The keeper laughed, and pommelled the pavement vigorously: "I was never through it—haven't the courage—nor do I know anybody who has been. They say it has a thousand pillars, and that it is supplied by a river. They tell too how people have gone into it with boats, and never come out, and that it is alive with ghosts; but of these stories I say nothing, because I know nothing."

Sergius thereupon departed.

CHAPTER XXII

THE PRINCE OF INDIA SEEKS MAHOMMED

All the next night, Syama, his ear against his master's door, felt the jar of the machine–like tread in the study. At intervals it would slow, but not once did it stop. The poor slave was himself nearly worn out. Sympathy has a fashion of burdening us without in the least lightening the burden which occasions it.

To–morrows may be long coming, but they keep coming. Time is a mill, and to–morrows are but the dust of its grinding. Uel arose early. He had slept soundly. His first move was to send the Prince all the clerks he could find in the market, and shortly afterwards the city was re–blazoned with bills.

"BYZANTINES!"

"Fathers and mothers of Byzantium!"

"Lael, the daughter of Uel the merchant, has not been found. Wherefore I now offer 10,000 bezants in gold for her dead or alive, and 6,000 bezants in gold for evidence which will lead to the discovery and conviction of her abductors."

"The offers will conclude with to–day."

"PRINCE OF INDIA."

There was a sensation when the new placards had been generally read; yet the hunt of the day before was not resumed. It was considered exhausted. Men and women poured into the streets and talked and talked—about the Prince of India. By ten o'clock all known of him and a great deal more had gone through numberless discussions; and could he have heard the conclusions reached he had never smiled again. By a consensus singularly unanimous, he was an Indian, vastly rich, but not a Prince, and his interest in the stolen girl was owing to forbidden relations. This latter

part of the judgment, by far the most cruel, might have been traced to Demedes.

In all the city there had not been a more tireless hunter than Demedes. He seemed everywhere present—on the ships, on the walls, in the gardens and churches—nay, it were easier telling where he had not been. And by whomsoever met, he was in good spirits, fertile in suggestions, and sure of success. He in fact distinguished himself in the search, and gave proof of a knowledge of the capital amazing to the oldest inhabitants. Of course his role was to waste the energy of the mass. In every pack of beagles it is said there is one particularly gifted in the discovery of false scents. Such was Demedes that first day, until about two o'clock. The results of the quest were then in, and of the theories to which he listened, nothing pleased him like the absence of a suggestion of the second sedan. There were witnesses to tell of the gorgeous chair, and its flitting here and yonder through the twilight; none saw the other. This seems to have sufficed him, and he suddenly gave up the chase; appearing in the garden of the Bucoleon, he declared the uselessness of further effort. The Jewess, he said, was not in Byzantium; she had been carried off by the Bulgarians, and was then on the road to some Turkish harem. From that moment the search began to fall off, and by evening it was entirely discontinued.

Upon appearance of the placards the second day, Demedes was again equal to the emergency. He collected his brethren in the Temple, organized them into parties, and sent them everywhere—to Galata, to the towns along the Bosphorus, down the western shore of the Marmora, over to the Islands, and up to the forest of Belgrade—to every place, in short, except the right one. And this conduct, apparently sincere, certainly energetic, bore its expected fruit; by noon he was the hero of the occasion, the admiration of the city.

When very early in the second day the disinclination of the people to renew the search was reported to the Prince of India, he looked incredulous, and broke out:

"What! Not for ten thousand bezants!—more gold than they have had in their treasury at one time in ten years!—enough to set up three empires of

such dwindle! To what is the world coming?"

An hour or so later, he was told of the total failure of his second proclamation. The information drove him with increased speed across the floor.

"I have an adversary somewhere," he was saying to himself—"an adversary more powerful than gold in quantity. Are there two such in Byzantium?"

An account of Demedes' action gave him some comfort.

About the third hour, Sergius asked to see him, and was admitted. After a simple expression of sympathy, the heartiness of which was attested by his sad voice and dejected countenance, the monk said: "Prince of India, I cannot tell you the reasons of my opinion; yet I believe the young woman is a prisoner here in this city. I will also beg you not to ask me where I think she is held, or by whom. It may turn out that I am mistaken; I will then feel better of having had no confidant. With this statement—submitted with acknowledged uncertainty—can you trust me?"

"You are Sergius, the monk?"

"So they call me; though here I have not been raised to the priesthood."

"I have heard the poor child speak of you. You were a favorite with her."

The Prince spoke with trouble.

"I am greatly pleased to hear it."

The trouble of the Prince was contagious, but Sergius presently recovered.

"Probably the best certificate of my sincerity, Prince—the best I can furnish you—is that your gold is no incentive to the trial at finding her which I have a mind to make. If I succeed, a semblance of pay or reward would spoil my happiness."

The Jew surveyed him curiously. "Almost I doubt you," he said.

"Yes, I can understand. Avarice is so common, and disinterestedness, friendship, and love so uncommon."

"Verily, a great truth has struck you early."

"Well, hear what I have to ask."

"Speak."

"You have in your service an African"—

"Nilo?"

"That is his name. He is strong, faithful, and brave, qualities I may need more than gold. Will you allow him to go with me?"

The Prince's look and manner changed, and he took the monk's hand. "Forgive me," he said warmly—"forgive me, if I spoke doubtfully—forgive me, if I misunderstood you."

Then, with his usual promptitude, he went to the door, and bade Syama bring Nilo.

"You know my method of speech with him?" the Prince asked.

"Yes," Sergius replied.

"If you have instructions for him, see they are given in a good light, for in the dark he cannot comprehend."

Nilo came, and kissed his master's hand. He understood the trouble which had befallen.

"This," the Prince said to him, "is Sergius, the monk. He believes he knows where the little Princess is, and has asked that you may go with him. Are you willing?"

The King looked assent.

"It is arranged," the master added to Sergius. "Have you other suggestion?"

"It were better he put off his African costume."

"For the Greek?"

"The Greek will excite less attention."

"Very well."

In a short time Nilo presented himself in Byzantine dress, with exception of a bright blue handkerchief on his head.

"Now, I pray you, Prince, give me a room. I wish to talk with the man privately."

The request was granted, the instructions given, and Sergius reappeared to take leave.

"Nilo and I are good friends, Prince. He understands me."

"He may be too eager. Remember I found him a savage."

With these words, the Prince and the young Russian parted.

After this nobody came to the house. The excitement had been a flash. Now it seemed entirely dead, and dead without a clew. When Time goes afoot his feet are of lead; and in this instance his walk was over the Prince's heart. By noon he was dreadfully wrought up.

"Let them look to it, let them look to it!" he kept repeating, sometimes shaking a clinched hand. Occasionally the idea to which he thus darkly referred had power to bring him to a halt. "I have an adversary. Who is he?" Ere long the question possessed him entirely. It was then as if he despaired of recovering Lael, and had but one earthly object—vengeance. "Ah, my God, my God! Am I to lose her, and never know my enemy? Action, action, or I will go mad!" Uel came with his usual report: "Alas! I have nothing." The Prince scarcely heard or saw him. "There are but two places where this enemy can harbor," he was repeating to himself—"but two; the palace and"—he brought his hands together vehemently—"the church. Where else are they who have power to arrest a whole people in earnest movement? Whom else have I offended? Ay, there it is! I preached God; therefore the child must perish. So much for Christian pity!"

All the forces in his nature became active.

"Go," he said to Uel, "order two men for my chair. Syama will attend me."

The merchant left him on the floor patting one hand with another.

"Yes, yes, I will try it—I will see if there is such thing as Christian pity—I will see. It may have swarmed, and gone to hive at Blacherne." In going to the palace, he continually exhorted the porters:

"Faster, faster, my men!"

The officer at the gate received him kindly, and came back with the answer, "His Majesty will see you."

Again the audience chamber, Constantine on the dais, his courtiers each in place; again the Dean in his role of Grand Chamberlain; again the prostrations. Ceremony at Blacherne was never remitted. There is a poverty which makes kings miserable.

"Draw nearer, Prince," said Constantine, benignly. "I am very busy. A courier arrived this morning from Adrianople with report that my august friend, the Sultan Amurath, is sick, and his physicians think him sick unto death. I was not prepared for the responsibilities which are rising; but I have heard of thy great misfortune, and out of sympathy bade my officer bring thee hither. By accounts the child was rarely intelligent and lovely, and I did not believe there was in my capital a man to do her such inhuman wrong. The progress of the search thou didst institute so wisely I have watched with solicitude little less than thine own. My officials everywhere have orders to spare no effort or expense to discover the guilty parties; for if the conspiracy succeed once, it will derive courage and try again, thus menacing every family in my Empire. If thou knowest aught else in my power to do, I will gladly hear it."

The Emperor, intent upon his expressions, failed to observe the gleam which shone in the Wanderer's eyes, excited by mention of the condition of the Sultan.

"I will not try Your Majesty's patience, since I know the responsibilities to which you have referred concern the welfare of an Empire, while I am troubled not knowing if one poor soul be dead or alive; yet she was the world to me"—thus the Prince began, and the knightly soul of the Emperor was touched, for his look softened, and with his hand he gently tapped the golden cone of the right arm of his throne.

"That which brought me to your feet," the Prince continued, "is partly answered. The orders to your officers exhaust your personal endeavor, unless—unless"—

"Speak, Prince."

"Your Majesty, I shrink from giving offence, and yet I have in this terrible affair an enemy who is my master. Yesterday Byzantium adopted my cause, and lent me her eyes and hands; before the sun went down her ardor cooled; to–day she will not go a rood. What are we to think, what do, my Lord, when gold and pity alike lose their influence?… I will not stop to say what he must be who is so much my enemy as to lay an icy finger on the warm pulse of the people. When we who have grown old cast about for a hidden foe, where do we habitually look? Where, except among those whom we have offended? Whom have I offended? Here in the audience you honored me with, I ventured to argue in favor of universal brotherhood in faith, and God the principle of agreement; and there were present some who dealt me insult, and menaced me, until Your Majesty sent armed men to protect me from their violence. They have the ear of the public—they are my adversaries. Shall I call them the Church?"

Constantine replied calmly: "The head of the Church sat here at my right hand that day, Prince, and he did not interrupt you; neither did he menace you. But say you are right—that they of whom you speak are the Church—what can I do?"

"The Church has thunders to terrify and subdue the wicked, and Your Majesty is the head of the Church."

"Nay, Prince, I fear thou hast studied us unfairly. I am a member—a follower—a subscriber to the faith—its thunders are not mine."

A despairing look overcast the countenance of the visitor, and he trembled. "Oh, my God! There is no hope further—she is lost—lost!" But recovering directly, he said: "I crave pardon for interrupting Your Majesty. Give me permission to retire. I have much work to do."

Constantine bowed, and on raising his head, declared with feeling to his officers: "The wrong to this man is great."

The Wanderer moved backward slowly, his eyes emitting uncertain light; pausing, he pointed to the Emperor, and said, solemnly: "My Lord, thou hadst thy power to do justice from God; it hath slipped from thee. The choice was thine, to rule the Church or be ruled by it; thou hast chosen, and art lost, and thy Empire with thee."

He was at the door before any one present could arouse from surprise; then while they were looking at each other, and making ready to cry out, he came back clear to the dais, and knelt. There was in his manner and countenance so much of utter hopelessness, that the whole court stood still, each man in the attitude the return found him.

"My Lord," he said, "thou mightest have saved me—I forgive thee that thou didst not. See—here"—he thrust a hand in the bosom of his gown, and from a pocket drew the great emerald—"I will leave thee this talisman—it belonged to King Solomon, the son of David—I found it in the tomb of Hiram, King of Tyre—it is thine, my Lord, so thou fitly punish the robber of the lost daughter of my soul, my Gul Bahar. Farewell."

He laid the jewel on the edge of the dais, and rising, betook himself to the door again, and disappeared before the Dean was sufficiently mindful of his duty.

"The man is mad," the Emperor exclaimed.

"Take up the stone"—he spoke to the Dean—"and return it to him to–morrow."**[34]** For a time then the emerald was kept passing from hand to hand by the courtiers, none of whom had ever seen its peer for size and brilliance; more than one of them touched it with awe, for despite a disposition to be incredulous in the matter of traditions incident to precious stones, the legend here, left behind him by the mysterious old man, was accepted—this was a talisman—it had belonged to Solomon—it had been found by the Prince of India—and he was a Prince—nobody but Indian Princes had such emeralds to give away. But while they bandied the talisman about, the Emperor sat, his chin in the palm of his right hand, the elbow on the golden cone, not seeing as much as thinking, nor thinking as much as silently repeating the strange words of the stranger: "Thou hadst thy power to do justice from God; it hath slipped from thee. The choice was thine to rule the Church or be ruled by it. Thou hast chosen, and art lost, and thy Empire with thee." Was this prophetic? What did it mean? And by and by he found a meaning. The first Constantine made the Church; now the Church will unmake the last Constantine. How many

there are who spend their youth yearning and fighting to write their names in history, then spend their old age shuddering to read them there!

The Prince of India was scarcely in his study, certainly he was not yet calmed down from the passion into which he had been thrown at Blacherne, when Syama informed him there was a man below waiting to see him.

"Who is he?"

The servant shook his head.

"Well, bring him here."

Presently a gypsy, at least in right of his mother, and tent–born in the valley of Buyukdere, slender, dark–skinned, and by occupation a fisherman, presented himself. From the strength of the odor he brought with him, the yield of his net during the night must have been unusually large.

"Am I in presence of the Prince of India?" the man asked, in excellent Arabic, and a manner impossible of acquisition except in the daily life of a court of the period.

The Prince bowed.

"The Prince of India who is the friend of the Sultan Mahommed?" the other inquired, with greater particularity. "Sultan Mahommed? Prince Mahommed, you mean."

"No—Mahommed the Sultan."

A flash of joy leaped from the Prince's eyes—the first of the kind in two days.

The stranger addressed himself to explanation.

"Forgive my bringing the smell of mullet and mackerel into your house. I am obeying instructions which require me to communicate with you in disguise. I have a despatch to tell who I am, and more of my business than I know myself."

The messenger took from his head the dirty cloth covering it, and from its folds produced a slip of paper; with a salute of hand to breast and

forehead, declarative of a Turk to the habit born, he delivered the slip, and walked apart to give opportunity for its reading. This was the writing in free translation:

"Mahommed, Son of Amurath, Sultan of Sultans, to the Prince of India."

"I am about returning to Magnesia. My father—may the prayers of the Prophet, almighty with God, preserve him from long suffering!—is fast falling into weakness of body and mind. Ali, son of Abed–din the Faithful, is charged instantly the great soul is departed on its way to Paradise to ride as the north wind flies, and give thee a record which Abed–din is to make on peril of his soul, abating not the fraction of a second. Thou wilt understand it, and the purpose of the sending."

The Prince of India, with the slip in his hand, walked the floor once from west to east to regain the mastery of himself.

"Ali, son of Abed–din the Faithful," he then said, "has a record for me."

Now the thongs of Ali's sandals were united just below the instep with brass buttons; stooping he took off that of the left sandal, and gave it a sharp twist; whereupon the top came off, disclosing a cavity, and a ribbon of the finest satin snugly folded in it. He gave the ribbon to the Prince, saying:

"The button of the plane tree planted has not in promise any great thing like this I take from the button of my sandal. Now is my mission done. Praised be Allah!" And while the Prince read, he recapped the button, and restored it in place.

The bit of yellow satin, when unfolded, presented a diagram which the Prince at first thought a nativity; upon closer inspection, he asked the courier:

"Son of Abed–din, did thy father draw this?"

"No, it is the handiwork of my Lord, the Sultan Mahommed."

"But it is a record of death, not of birth."

"Insomuch is my Lord, the Sultan Mahommed, wiser in his youth than many men in their age"—Ali paused to formally salute the opinion. "He selected the ribbon, and drew the figure—did all you behold, indeed,

except the writing in the square; that he intrusted to my father, saying at the time: 'The Prince of India, when he sees the minute in the square, will say it is not a nativity; have one there to tell him I, Mahommed, avouch, 'Twice in his life I had the throne from my august father; now has he given it to me again, this third time with death to certify it mine in perpetuity; wherefore it is but righteous holding that the instant of his final secession must be counted the beginning of my reign; for often as a man has back the property he parted from as a loan, is it not his? What ceremony is then needed to perfect his title?"

"If one have wisdom, O son of Abed–din, whence is it except from Allah? Let not thy opinion of thy young master escape thee. Were he to die to–morrow"—

"Allah forbid!" exclaimed Ali.

"Fear it not," returned the Prince, smiling at the young man's earnestness: "for is it not written, 'A soul cannot die unless by permission of God, according to a writing definite as to time'?**[35]** —I was about to say, there is not in his generation another to lie as close in the bosom of the Prophet. Where is he now?"

"He rides doubtless to Adrianople. The moment I set out hither, which was next minute after the great decease, a despatch was started for him by Khalil the Grand Vizier."

"Knowest thou the road he will take?"

"By Gallipoli."

"Behold, Ali!"—from his finger the Prince took a ring. "This for thy good news. Now to the road again, the White Castle first. Tell the Governor there to keep ward to–night with unlocked gates, for I may seek them in haste. Then put thyself in the Lord Mahommed's way coming from Gallipoli, and when thou hast kissed his sandals for me, and given him my love and duty, tell him I have perfect understanding of the nativity, and will meet him in Adrianople. Hast thou eaten and drunk?"

"Eaten, not drunk, my Lord."

"Come then, and I will put thee in the way to some red wine; for art thou not a traveller?"

The son of Abed–din saluted, saying simply: "*Meshallah!*" and was presently in care of Syama; after which the Prince took the ribbon to the table, spread it out carefully, and stood over it in the strong light, studying the symbols and writing in the square of

[Illustration]

"It is the nativity of an Empire,**[36]** not a man," the Prince said, his gaze still on the figure—"an Empire which I will make great for the punishment of these robbers of children."

He stood up at the last word, and continued, excitedly: "It is the word of God, else it had not come to me now nigh overcome and perishing in bitter waters; and it calls me to do His will. Give over the child, it says—she is lost to thee. Go up now, and be thou my instrument this once again—I AM THE I AM whom Moses knew, the Lord God of Israel who covenanted with Abraham, and with whom there is no forgetting—no, not though the world follow the leaf blown into the mouth of a roaring furnace. I hear, O God! I hear—I am going!"

This, it will be observed, is the second of the two days of grace the Prince appears to have given the city for the return of Lael; and as it is rapidly going without a token of performance, our curiosity increases to know the terrible thing in reserve of which some of his outbursts have vaguely apprised us.

A few turns across the floor brought him back to apparent calmness; indeed, but for the fitful light in his eyes and the swollen veins about his temples, it might be supposed he had been successful in putting his distresses by. He brought Syama in, and, for the first time in two days, took a seat.

"Listen, and closely," he said; "for I would be sure you comprehend me. Have you laid the Sacred Books in the boxes?"

Syama, in his way, answered, yes.

"Are the boxes secure? They may have to go a long journey."

"Yes."

"Did you place the jewels in new bags? The old ones were well nigh gone."

"Yes."

"Are they in the gurglet now?"

"Yes."

"You know we will have to keep it filled with water."

"Yes."

"My medicines—are they ready for packing?"

"Yes."

"Return them to their cases carefully. I cannot afford to leave or lose them. And the sword—is it with the books?"

"Yes."

"Very well. Attend again. On my return from the voyage I made the other day for the treasure you have in care"—he paused for a sign of comprehension—"I retained the vessel in my service, and directed the captain to be at anchor in the harbor before St. Peter's gate"—another pause—"I also charged him to keep lookout for a signal to bring the galley to the landing; in the day, the signal would be a blue handkerchief waved; at night, a lantern swung four times thus"—he gave the illustration. "Now to the purpose of all this. Give heed. I may wish to go aboard to–night, but at what hour I cannot tell. In preparation, however, you will get the porters who took me to the palace to–day, and have them take the boxes and gurglet of which I have been speaking to St. Peter's gate. You will go with them, make the signal to the captain, and see they are safely shipped. The other servants will accompany you. You understand?"

Syama nodded.

"Attend further. When the goods are on the galley, you will stay and guard them. All the other property you will leave in the house here just as it is. You are certain you comprehend?"

"Yes."

"Then set about the work at once. Everything must be on the ship before dark."

The master offered his hand, and the slave kissed it, and went softly out.

Immediately that he was alone, the Prince ascended to the roof. He stood by the table a moment, giving a thought to the many times his Gul Bahar had kept watch on the stars for him. They would come and go regularly as of old, but she?—He shook with sudden passion, and walked around taking what might have answered for last looks at familiar landmarks in the wide environment—at the old church near by and the small section of Blacherne in the west, the heights of Galata and the shapely tower northwardly, the fainter glimpses of Scutari in the east. Then he looked to the southwest where, under a vast expanse of sky, he knew the Marmora was lying asleep; and at once his face brightened. In that quarter a bank of lead–colored clouds stretched far along the horizon, sending rifts lighter hued upward like a fan opening toward the zenith. He raised his hand, and held it palm thitherward, and smiled at feeling a breath of air. Somehow the cloud associated itself with the purpose of which he was dreaming, for he said audibly, his eyes fiercely lighted:

"O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul, and have not set thee before them. But now hast thou thy hand under my head; now the wind cometh, and their punishment; and it is for me to scourge them."

He lingered on the roof, walking sometimes, but for the most part seated. The cloud in the southwest seemed the great attraction. Assured it was still coming, he would drop awhile into deep thought. If there were calls at the street door, he did not hear them. At length the sun, going down, was met and covered out of sight by the curtain beyond the Marmora. About the same time a wave of cold February air rolled into the city, and to escape it he went below.

The silence there was observable; for now Syama had finished, and the house was deserted. Through the rooms upper and lower he stalked gloomy and restless, pausing now and then to listen to a sufflation noisier and more portentous than its predecessors; and the moans with which the

intermittent blast turned the corners and occasionally surged through the windows he received smilingly, much as hospitable men welcome friends, or as conspirators greet each other; and often as they recurred, he replied to them in the sonorous words of the Psalm, and the refrain, "Now the wind cometh, and the punishment."

When night was fallen, he crossed the street to Uel's. After the first greeting, the conversation between the two was remarkable chiefly for its lapses. It is always so with persons who have a sorrow in common—the pleasure is in their society, not in exchange of words.

In one thing the brethren were agreed—Lael was lost. By and by the Prince concluded it time for him to depart. There was a lamp burning above the table; he went to it, and called Uel; and when he was come, the elder drew out a sealed purse, saying:

"Our pretty Gul Bahar may yet be found. The methods of the Lord we believe in are past finding out. If it should be that I am not in the city when she is brought home, I would not she should have cause to say I ceased thinking of her with a love equal to yours—a father's love. Wherefore, O son of Jahdai, I give you this. It is full of jewels, each a fortune in itself. If she comes, they are hers; if a year passes, and she is not found, they are yours to keep, give or sell, as you please. You have furnished me happiness which this sorrow is not strong enough to efface. I will not pay you, for acceptance in such kind were shameful to you as the offer would be to me; yet if she comes not in the year, break the seal. We sometimes wear rings in help of pleasant memories."

"Is your going so certain?" Uel asked.

"O my youngest brother, I am a traveller even as you are a merchant, with the difference, I have no home. So the Lord be with you. Farewell."

Then they kissed each other tenderly.

"Will I not hear from you?" Uel inquired.

"Ah, thank you," and the Wanderer returned to him and said, as if to show who was first in his very farewell thought:

"Thank you for the reminder. If peradventure you too should be gone when she is found, she will then be in want of a home. Provide against that; for she is such a sweet stranger to the world."

"Tell me how, and I will keep your wish as it were part of the Law."

"There is a woman in Byzantium worthy to have Good follow her name whenever it is spoken or written."

"Give me her name, my Lord."

"The Princess Irene."

"But she is a Christian!"

Uel spoke in surprise.

"Yes, son of Jahdai, she is a Christian. Nevertheless send Lael to her. Again I leave you where I rest myself—with God—our God."

Thereupon he went out finally, and between gusts of wind regained his own house. He stopped on entering, and barred the door behind him; then he groped his way to the kitchen, and taking a lamp from its place, raked together the embers smothering in a brazier habitually kept for retention of fire, and lighted the lamp. He next broke up some stools and small tables, and with the pieces made a pile under the grand stairway to the second floor, muttering as he worked: "The proud are risen against me; and now the wind cometh, and punishment."

Once more he walked through the rooms, and ascended to the roof. There, just as he cleared the door, as if it were saluting him, and determined to give him a trial of its force, a blast leaped upon him, like an embodiment out of the cloud in full possession of both world and sky, and started his gown astream, and twisting his hair and beard into lashes whipped his eyes and ears with them, and howled, and snatched his breath nearly out of his mouth. Wind it was, and darkness somewhat like that Egypt knew what time the deliverer, with God behind him, was trying strength with the King's sorcerers—wind and darkness, but not a drop of rain. He grasped the door–post, and listened to the crashing of heavy things on the neighboring roofs, and the rattle of light things for the finding of which loose here and there the gust of a storm may be trusted

where eyes are useless. And noticing that obstructions served merely to break the flying forces into eddies, he laughed and shouted by turns so the inmates of the houses near might have heard had they been out as he was instead of cowering in their beds: "The proud are risen against me, and the assembly of violent men have sought after my soul; and now—ha, ha, ha!—the wind cometh and the punishment!"

Availing himself of a respite in the blowing, he ran across the roof and looked over into the street, and seeing nothing, neither light nor living thing, he repeated the refrain with a slight variation: "And the wind—ha, ha!—the wind *is* come, and the punishment!"—then he fled back, and down from the roof.

And now the purpose in reserve must have revelation.

The grand staircase sprang from the floor open beneath like a bridge. Passing under it, he set the lamp against the heap of kindling there, and the smell of scorching wood spread abroad, followed by smoke and the crackle and snap of wood beginning to burn.

It was not long until the flames, gathering life and strength, were beyond him to stay or extinguish them, had he been taken with sudden repentance. From step to step they leaped, the room meantime filling fast with suffocating gases. When he knew they were beyond the efforts of any and all whom they might attract, and must burst into conflagration the instant they reached the lightest of the gusts playing havoc outside, he went down on his hands and knees, for else it had been difficult for him to breathe, and crawled to the door. Drawing himself up there, he undid the bar, and edged through into the street; nor was there a soul to see the puff of smoke and murky gleam which passed out with him.

His spirit was too drunken with glee to trouble itself with precautions now; yet he stopped long enough to repeat the refrain, with a hideous spasm of laughter: "And now—ha, ha!—the wind *is* come, and the fire, and the punishment." Then he wrapped his gown closer about his form bending to meet the gale, and went leisurely down the street, intending to make St. Peter's gate.

Where the intersections left openings, the Jew, now a fugitive rather than a wanderer—a fugitive nevertheless who knew perfectly where he was going, and that welcome awaited him there—halted to scan the cloudy floor of the sky above the site of the house he had just abandoned. A redness flickering and unsteady over in that quarter was the first assurance he had of the growth of the flame of small beginning under the grand staircase.

"Now the meeting of wind and fire!—Now speedily these hypocrites and tongue–servers, bastards of Byzantium, shall know Israel has a God in whom they have no lot, and in what regard he holds conniving at the rape of his daughters. Blow, Wind, blow harder! Rise, Fire, and spread—be a thousand lions in roaring till these tremble like hunted curs! The few innocent are not more in the account than moths burrowed in woven wool and feeding on its fineness. Already the guilty begin to pray—but to whom? Blow, O Wind! Spread and spare not, O Fire!"

Thus he exulted; and as if it heard him and were making answer to his imprecations, a column, pinked by the liberated fire below it, a burst of sparks in its core, shot up in sudden vastness like a Titan rushing to seizure of the world; but presently the gale struck and toppled it over toward Blacherne in the northwest.

"That way points the punishment? I remember I offered him God and peace and good–will to men, and he rejected them. Blow, Winds! Now are ye but breezes from the south, spice–laden to me, but in his ears be as chariots descending. And thou, O Fire! Forget not the justice to be done, and whose servant thou art. Leave Heaven to say which is guiltier; they who work at the deflowerment of the innocent, or he who answers no to the Everlasting offering him love. Unto him be thou as banners above the chariots!"

Now a noise began—at first faint and uncertain, then, as the red column sprang up, it strengthened, and ere long defined itself—Fire, Fire!

It seemed the city awoke with that cry. And there was peering from windows, opening of doors, rushing from houses, and hurrying to where the angry spot on the floor of the cloud which shut Heaven off was

widening and deepening. In a space incredibly quick, the streets—those leading to the corner occupied by the Jew as well—became rivulets flowing with people, and then blatant rivers.

"My God, what a night for a fire!"

"There will be nothing left of us by morning, not even ashes."

"And the women and children—think of them!"

"Fire—fire—fire!"

Exchanges like these dinned the Jew until, finding himself an obstruction, he moved on. Not a phase of the awful excitement escaped him—the racing of men—half–clad women assembling—children staring wild–eyed at the smoke extending luridly across the fifth and sixth hills to the seventh—white faces, exclamations, and not seldom resort to crucifixes and prayers to the Blessed Lady of Blacherne—he heard and saw them all—yet kept on toward St. Peter's gate, now an easy thing, since the thoroughfares were so aglow he could neither stumble nor miss the right one. A company of soldiers running nearly knocked him down; but finally he reached the portal, and passed out without challenge. A brief search then for his galley; and going aboard, after replying to a few questions about the fire, he bade the captain cast off, and run for the Bosphorus.

"It looks as if the city would all go," he said; and the mariner, thinking him afraid, summoned his oarsmen, and to please him made haste, as he too well might, for the light of the burning projected over the wall, and, flung back from the cloud overhead far as the eye could penetrate, illuminated the harbor as it did the streets, bringing the ships to view, their crews on deck, and Galata, wall, housetops and tower, crowded with people awestruck by the immensity of the calamity.

When the galley outgoing cleared Point Serail, the wind and the long swells beating in from the Marmora white with foam struck it with such force that keeping firm grip of their oars was hard for the rowers, and they began to cry out; whereupon the captain sought his passenger.

"My Lord," he said, "I have plied these waters from boyhood, and never saw them in a night like this. Let me return to the harbor."

"What, is it not light enough?"

The sailor crossed himself, and replied: "There is light enough—such as it is!" and he shuddered. "But the wind, and the running sea, my Lord"—

"Oh! for them, keep on. Under the mountain height of Scutari the sailing will be plain."

And with much wonder how one so afraid of fire could be so indifferent to danger from flood and gale, the captain addressed himself to manoeuvring his vessel.

"Now," said the Jew, when at last they were well in under the Asiatic shore—"now bear away up the Bosphorus."

The light kept following him the hour and more required to make the Sweet Waters and the White Castle; and even there the reflection from the cloud above the ill–fated city was strong enough to cast half the stream in shadow from the sycamores lining its left bank.

The Governor of the Castle received the friend of his master, the new Sultan, at the landing; and from the wall just before retiring, the latter took a last look at the signs down where the ancient capital was struggling against annihilation. Glutted with imaginings of all that was transpiring there, he clapped his hands, and repeated the refrain in its past form:

"Now have the winds come, and the fire, and the punishment. So be it ever unto all who encourage violence to children, and reject God."

An hour afterwards, he was asleep peacefully as if there were no such thing as conscience, or a misery like remorse.

* * * * *

Shortly after midnight an officer of the guard ventured to approach the couch of the Emperor Constantine; in his great excitement he even shook the sacred person.

"Awake, Your Majesty, awake, and save the city. It is a sea of fire."

Constantine was quickly attired, and went first to the top of the Tower of Isaac. He was filled with horror by what he beheld; but he had soldierly qualities—amongst others the faculty of keeping a clear head in crises. He saw the conflagration was taking direction with the wind and coming straight toward Blacherne, where, for want of aliment, it needs must stop. Everything in its line of progress was doomed; but he decided it possible to prevent extension right and left of that line, and acting promptly, he brought the entire military force from the barracks to cooperate with the people. The strategy was successful.

Gazing from the pinnacle as the sun rose, he easily traced a blackened swath cut from the fifth hill up to the eastward wall of the imperial grounds; and, in proof of the fury of the gale, the terraces of the garden were covered inches deep with ashes and scoriac–looking flakes of what at sunset had been happy homes. And the dead? Ascertainment of the many who perished was never had; neither did closest inquiry discover the origin of the fire. The volume of iniquities awaiting exposure Judgment Day must be immeasurable, if it is of the book material in favor among mortals.

The Prince of India was supposed to have been one of the victims of the fire, and not a little sympathy was expended for the mysterious foreigner. But in refuge at the White Castle, that worthy greedily devoured the intelligence he had the Governor send for next day. One piece of news, however, did more than dash the satisfaction he secretly indulged—Uel, the son of Jahdai, was dead—and dead of injuries suffered the night of the catastrophe.

A horrible foreboding struck the grim incendiary. Was the old destiny still pursuing him? Was it still a part of the Judgment that every human being who had to do with him in love, friendship or business, every one on whom he looked in favor, must be overtaken soon or late with a doom of some kind? From that moment, moved by an inscrutable prompting of spirit, he began a list of those thus unfortunate—Lael first, then Uel. Who next?

The reader will remember the merchant's house was opposite the Prince's, with a street between them. Unfortunately the street was narrow; the heat from one building beat across it and attacked the other. Uel managed to get out safely; but recollecting the jewels intrusted to him for Lael, he rushed back to recover them. Staggering out again blind and roasting, he fell on the pave, and was carried off, but with the purse intact. Next day he succumbed to the injuries. In his last hour, he dictated a letter to the Princess Irene, begging her to accept the guardianship of his daughter, if God willed her return. Such, he said, was his wish, and the Prince of India's; and with the missive, he forwarded the jewels, and a statement of the property he was leaving in the market. They and all his were for the child—so the disposition ran, concluding with a paragraph remarkable for the confidence it manifested in the Christian trustee. "But if she is not returned alive within a year from this date, then, O excellent Princess, I pray you to be my heir, holding everything of mine yours unconditionally. And may God keep you!"

CHAPTER XXIII

SERGIUS AND NILO TAKE UP THE HUNT

We have seen the result of Sergius' interview with the Prince of India, and remember that it was yet early in the morning after Lael's disappearance when, in company with Nilo, he bade the eccentric stranger adieu, and set forth to try his theory respecting the lost girl.

About noon he appeared southwest of the Hippodrome in the street leading past the cistern–keeper's abode. Nilo, by arrangement, followed at a distance, keeping him in sight. By his side there was a fruit peddler, one of the every–day class whose successors are banes of life to all with whom in the modern Byzantium a morning nap is the sweetest preparation for the day.

The peddler carried a huge basket strapped to his forehead. He was also equipped with a wooden platter for the display of samples of his stock; and it must be said the medlars, oranges, figs of Smyrna, and the luscious green grapes in enormous clusters freshly plucked in the vineyards on the Asiatic shore over against the Isles of the Princes, were very tempting; especially so as the hour was when the whole world acknowledges the utility of lunching as a stay for dinner.

It is not necessary to give the conversation between the man of fruits and the young Russian. The former was endeavoring to sell. Presently they reached a point from which the cistern–keeper was visible, seated, as usual, just within the door pommelling the pavement. Sergius stopped there, and affected to examine his companion's stock; then, as if of a mind, he said:

"Oh, well! Let us cross the street, and if the man yonder will give me a room in which I can eat to my content, I will buy of you. Let us try him."

The two made their way to the door.

"Good day, my friend," Sergius said, to the keeper, who recognized him, and rising, returned the salutation pleasantly enough.

"You were here yesterday," he said, "I am glad to see you again. Come in."

"Thank you," Sergius returned. "I am hungry, and should like some of this man's store; but it is uncomfortable eating in the street; so I thought you might not be offended if I asked a room for the purpose; particularly as I give you a hearty invitation to share the repast with me."

In support of the request the peddler held the platter to the keeper. The argument was good, and straightway, assuming the air of a connoisseur, the master of the house squeezed a medlar, and raising an orange to his nose smelt it, calculated its weight, and answered: "Why, yes—come right along to my sitting–room. I will get some knives; and when we are through, we will have a bowl of water, and a napkin. Things are not inviting out here as they might be."

"And the peddler?" Sergius inquired.

"Bring him along. We will make him show us the bottom of his basket. I believe you said you are a stranger?"

Sergius nodded.

"Well, I am not," the keeper continued, complacently. "I know these fellows. They all have tricks. Bring him in. I have no family. I live alone."

The monk acknowledged the invitation, but pausing to allow the peddler to enter first, he at the same time lifted his hat as if to readjust it; then a moment was taken to make a roll of the long fair hair, and tuck it securely under the hat. That finished, he stepped into the passage, and pursued after his host through a door on the left hand; whereupon the passage to the court was clear.

Now the play with the hat was a signal to Nilo. Rendered into words, it would have run thus: "The keeper is employed, and the way open. Come!" And the King, on the lookout, answered by sauntering slowly down, mindful if he hurried he might be followed, there being a number of persons in the vicinity.

At the door, he took time to examine the front of the house; then he, too, stepped into the passage and through it, and out into the court, where, with a glance, he took everything in—paved area, the curbing about the stairway to the water, the faces of the three sides of the square opposite that of the entrance, all unbroken by door, window, or panel, the sedan in the corner, the two poles lashed together and on end by the sedan. He looked behind him—the passage was yet clear—if seen coming in, he was not pursued. There was a smile on his shining black face; and his teeth, serrated along the edges after the military fashion in Kash–Cush, displayed themselves white as dressed coral. Evidently he was pleased and confident. Next he went to the curb, shot a quick look down the steps far as could be seen; thence he crossed to the sedan, surveyed its exterior, and opened the door. The interior appearing in good order, he entered and sat down, and closing the door, arranged the curtain in front, drew it slightly aside and peeped out, now to the door admitting from the passage, then to the curbing. Both were perfectly under view.

When the King issued from the chair, his smile was broader than before, and his teeth seemed to have received a fresh enamelling. Without pausing again, he proceeded to the opening of the cistern, and with his hands on the curbing right and left, let himself lightly down on the four stones of the first landing; a moment, and he began descent of the steps, taking time to inspect everything discernible in the shadowy space. At length he stood on the lower platform.

He was now in serious mood. The white pillars were wondrous vast, and the darkness—it may be doubted if night in its natural aspects is more impressive to the savage than the enlightened man; yet it is certain the former will take alarm quicker when shut in by walls of artful contrivance. His imagination then peoples the darkness with spirits, and what is most strange, the spirits are always unfriendly. To say now that Nilo, standing on the lower platform, was wholly unmoved, would be to deny him the sensibilities without which there can be none of the effects usually incident to courage and cowardice. The vastness of the receptacle stupefied him. The silence was a curtain he could feel; the water, deep and dark, looked so suggestive of death that the superstitious soul required a

little time to be itself again. But relief came, and he watched intently to see if there was a current in the black pool; he could discover none; then, having gained all the information he could, he ascended the steps and lifted himself out into the court. A glance through the passage—another at the sky—and he entered the sedan, and shut himself in.

The discussion of the fruit in the keeper's sitting–room meantime was interesting to the parties engaged in it. With excellent understanding of Nilo's occupation in the court, Sergius exerted himself to detain his host—if the term be acceptable—long as possible.

Fortunately no visitors came. Settling the score, and leaving a profusion of thanks behind him, he at length made his farewell, and spent the remainder of the afternoon on a bench in the Hippodrome.

Occasionally he went back to the street conducting to the cistern, and walked down it far enough to get a view of the keeper still at the door.

In the evening he ate at a confectionery near by, prolonging the meal till near dusk, and thence, business being suspended, he idled along the same thoroughfare in a manner to avoid attracting attention.

Still later, he found a seat in the recess of an unused doorway nearly in front of the house of such interest to him.

The manoeuvres thus detailed advise the reader somewhat of the particulars of the programme in execution by the monk and Nilo; nor that only—they notify him of the arrival of a very interesting part of the arrangement. In short, it is time to say that, one in the recess of the door, the other shut up in the sedan, they are both on the lookout for Demedes. Would he come? And when?

Anticipating a little, we may remark, if he comes, and goes into the cistern, Nilo is to open the street door and admit Sergius, who is then to take control of the after operations.

A little before sunset the keeper shut his front door. Sergius heard the iron bolt shoot into the mortice. He believed Demedes had not seen Lael since the abduction, and that he would not try to see her while the excitement was up and the hunt going forward. But now the city was

settled back into quiet—now, if she were indeed in the cistern, he would come, the night being in his favor. And further, if he merely appeared at the house, the circumstance would be strongly corroborative of the monk's theory; if he did more—if he actually entered the cistern, there would be an end of doubt, and Nilo could keep him there, while Sergius was bringing the authorities to the scene. Such was the scheme; and he who looks at it with proper understanding must perceive it did not contemplate unnecessary violence. On this score, indeed, the Prince of India's significant reminder that he had found Nilo a savage, had led Sergius to redoubled care in his instructions.

The first development in the affair took place under the King's eye.

Waiting in ambush was by no means new to him. He was not in the least troubled by impatience. To be sure, he would have felt more comfortable with a piece of bread and a cup of water; yet deprivations of the kind were within the expectations; and while there was a hope of good issue for the enterprise, he could endure them indefinitely. The charge given him pertained particularly to Demedes. No fear of his not recognizing the Greek. Had he not enjoyed the delight of holding him out over the wall to be dropped to death?

He was eager, but not impatient. His chief dependence was in the sense of feeling, which had been cultivated so the slightest vibration along the ground served him in lieu of hearing. The closing of the front door by the keeper—felt, not heard—apprised him the day was over.

Not long afterward the pavement was again jarred, bringing a return of the sensations he used to have when, stalking lions in Kash–Cush, he felt the earth thrill under the galloping of the camelopards stampeded.

He drew the curtain aside slightly, just as a man stepped into the court from the passage. The person carried a lighted lamp, and was not Demedes.

The cistern–keeper—for he it was—went to the curbing slowly, for the advance airs of the gale were threatening his lamp, and dropped dextrously through the aperture to the upper landing.

In ambush the King never admitted anything like curiosity. Presently he felt the pavement again jar. Nobody appeared at the passage. Another tremor more decided—then the King stepped softly from the sedan, and stealing barefooted to the curbing looked down the yawning hole.

The lamp on the platform enabled him to see a boat drawn up to the lower step, and the stranger in the act of stepping into it. Then the lamp was shifted to the bow of the boat—oars taken in hand—a push off, and swift evanishment.

We, with our better information of the devices employed, know what a simple trick it was on the keeper's part to bring the vessel to him—he had but to pull the right string in the right direction—but Nilo was left to his astonishment. Stealing back to his cover, he drew the door to, and struggled with the mystery.

Afterwhile, the mist dissipated, and a fact arose plainer to him than the mighty hand on his knee. The cistern was inhabited—some person was down there to be communicated with. What should the King do now?

The quandary was trying. Finally he concluded to stay where he was. The stranger might bring somebody back with him—possibly the lost child—such Lael was in his thoughts of her.

Afterwhile—he had no idea of time—he felt a shake run along the pavement, and saw the stranger appear coming up the steps, lamp in hand. Next instant the person crawled out of the curbing, and went into the house through the passage doorway. The King never took eye from the curbing—nobody followed after—the secret of the old reservatory was yet a secret.

Again Nilo debated whether to bring Sergius in, and again he decided to stay where he was.

Meantime the cloud which the Prince of India had descried from the roof of his house arrived on the wings of the gale. Ere long Sergius was shivering in the recess of the door. For relief he counted the beads of his rosary, and there was scarcely a Saint in the calendar omitted from his recitals. If there was potency in prayers the angels were in the cistern ministering to Lael.

The street became deserted. Everything living which had a refuge sought it; yet the gale increased: it howled and sang dirges; it started the innumerable loose trifles in its way to waltzing over the bowlders; every hinged fixture on the exposed house–fronts creaked and banged. Only a lover would voluntarily endure the outdoors of such a night—a lover or a villain unusually bold.

Near midnight—so Sergius judged—a dull redness began to tinge the cloud overhead, and brightening rapidly, it ere long cast a strong reflection downward. At first he was grateful for the light; afterwhile, however, he detected an uproar distinguishable from the wind; it had no rest or lulls, and in its rise became more and more a human tone. When shortly people rushed past his cover crying fire, he comprehended what it was. The illumination intensified. The whole city seemed in danger. There were women and children exposed; yet here he was waiting on a mere hope; there he could do something. Why not go?

While he debated, down the street from the direction of the Hippodrome he beheld a man coming fast despite the strength of the gusts. A cloak wrapped him from head to foot, somewhat after the fashion of a toga, and the face was buried in its folds; yet the air and manner suggested Demedes. Instantly the watcher quit arguing; and forgetful of the fire, and of the city in danger, he shrank closer into the recess.

The thoroughfare was wider than common, and the person approaching on the side opposite Sergius; when nearer, his low stature was observable. Would he stop at the cistern–keeper's?

Now he was at the door!

The Russian's heart was in his mouth.

Right in front of the door the man halted and knocked. The sound was so sharp a stone must have been used. Immediately the bolt inside was drawn, and the visitor passed in.

Was it Demedes? The monk breathed again—he believed it was—anyhow the King would determine the question, and there was nothing to do meantime but bide the event.

The sedan, it hardly requires saying, was a much more comfortable ambush than the recess of the door. Nilo merely felt the shaking the gale now and then gave the house. So, too, he bade welcome to the glare in the sky for the flushing it transmitted to the court. Only a wraith could have come from or gone into the cistern unseen by him.

The clapping to of the front door on the street was not lost to the King. Presently the person he had seen in the boat at the foot of the steps again issued from the passage, lamp in hand as before; but as he kept looking back deferentially, a gust leaped down, and extinguished the flame, compelling him to return; whereupon another man stepped out into the court, halting immediately. Nilo opened a little wider the gap in the curtain through which he was peeping.

It may be well to say here that the newcomer thus unwittingly exposing himself to observation was the same individual Sergius had seen admitted into the house. The keeper had taken him to a room for the rearrangement of his attire. Standing forth in the light now filling the court, he was still wrapped in the cloak, all except the head, which was jauntily covered with a white cap, in style not unlike a Scotch bonnet, garnished with two long red ostrich feathers held in place by a brooch that shot forth gleams of precious stones in artful arrangement. Once the man opened the cloak, exposing a vest of fine–linked mail, white with silver washing, and furnished with epaulettes or triangular plates, fitted gracefully to the shoulders. A ruff, which was but the complement of a cape of heavy lace, clothed the neck.

To call the feeling which now shot through the King's every fibre a sudden pleasure would scarcely be a sufficient description; it was rather the delight with which soldiers old in war acknowledge the presence of their foemen. In other words, the brave black recognized Demedes, and was strong minded enough to understand and appreciate the circumstances under which the discovery was made. If the savage arose in him, it should be remembered he was there to revenge a master's wrongs quite as much as to rescue a stolen girl. Moreover, the education he had received from his master was not in the direction of mercy to enemies.

The two—Demedes and the keeper—lost no time in entering the cistern, the latter going first. When the King thought they had reached the lower platform, he issued from the chair barefooted, and bending over the curbing beheld what went on below.

The Greek was holding the lamp. The occupation of his assistant was beyond comprehension until the boat moved slowly into view. Demedes then set the lamp down, divested himself of his heavy wrap, and taking the rower's seat, unshipped the oars. There was a brief conference; at the conclusion the subordinate joined his chief; whereupon the boat pushed off.

Thus far the affair was singularly in the line of Sergius' anticipations; and now to call him in!

There is little room for doubt that Nilo was in perfect recollection of the instructions he had received, and that his first intention was to obey them; for, standing by the curbing long enough to be assured the Greek was indeed in the gloomy cavern, whence escape was impossible except by some unknown exit, he walked slowly away, and was in the passage door when, looking back, he saw the keeper leaping out into the court.

To say truth, the King had witnessed the departure of the boat with misgivings. Catching the robbers was then easy; yet rescue of the girl was a different thing. What might they not do with her in the meantime? As he understood his master, her safety was even more in purpose than their seizure; wherefore his impulse was to keep them in sight without reference to Sergius. He could swim—yes, but the water was cold, and the darkness terrible to his imagination. It might be hours before he found the hiding–place of the thieves—indeed, he might never overtake them. His regret when he stepped into the passage was mighty; it enables us, however, to comprehend the rush of impetuous joy which now took possession of him. A step to the right, and he was behind the cheek of the door.

All unsuspicious of danger, the keeper came on; a few minutes, and he would be in bed and asleep, so easy was he in conscience. The ancient cistern had many secrets. What did another one matter? His foot was on the lintel—he heard a rustle close at his side—before he could dart back—

ere he could look or scream, two powerful hands were around his throat. He was not devoid of courage or strength, and resisted, struggling for breath. He merely succeeded in drawing his assailant out into the light far enough to get a glimpse of a giant and a face black and horrible to behold. A goblin from the cistern! And with this idea, he quit fighting, and sank to the floor. Nilo kept his grip needlessly—the fellow was dead of terror.

Here was a contingency not provided for in the arrangement Sergius had laid out with such care.

And what now?

It was for the King to answer.

He dragged the victim out in the court, and set a foot on his throat. All the savage in him was awake, and his thoughts pursued Demedes. Hungering for that life more than this one, he forgot the monk utterly. Had he a plank—anything in the least serviceable as a float—he would go after the master. He looked the enclosure over, and the sedan caught his eye, its door ajar. The door would suffice. He took hold of the limp body of the keeper, drew it after him, set it on the seat, and was about wrenching the door away, when he saw the poles. They were twelve or fourteen feet long and lashed together. On rafts not half so good he had in Kash–Cush crossed swollen streams, paddling with his hands. To take them to the cistern—to descend the steps with them—to launch himself on them—to push out into the darkness, were as one act, so swiftly were they accomplished. And going he knew not whither, but scorning the thought of another man betaking himself where he dared not, sustained by a feeling that he was in pursuit, and would have the advantage of a surprise when at last he overtook the enemy, we must leave the King awhile in order to bring up a dropped thread of our story.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE IMPERIAL CISTERN GIVES UP ITS SECRET

The reader will return—not unwillingly, it is hoped—to Lael.

The keeper, on watch for her, made haste to bar the door behind the carriers of the sedan, who, on their part, made greater haste to take boat and fly the city. From his sitting–room he brought a lamp, and opening the chair found the passenger in a corner to appearance dead. The head was hanging low; through the dishevelled hair the slightest margin of forehead shone marble white; a scarce perceptible rise and fall of the girlish bosom testified of the life still there. A woman at mercy, though dumb, is always eloquent.

"Here she is at last!" the keeper thought, while making a profane survey of the victim… "Well, if beauty was his object—beauty without love—he may be satisfied. That's as the man is. I would rather have the bezants she has cost him. The market's full of just such beauty in health and strength—beauty matured and alive, not wilted like this!… But every fish to its net, every man to his fate, as the infidels on the other shore say. To the cistern she must go, and I must put her there. Oh, how lucky! Her wits are out—prayers, tears, resistance would be uncomfortable. May the Saints keep her!" Closing the door of the sedan, he hurried out into the court, and thence down the cistern stairs to the lower platform, where he drew the boat in, and fixed it stationary by laying the oars across the gunwale from a step. The going and return were quick.

"The blood of doves, or the tears of women—I am not yet decided which is hardest on a soul… Come along!… There is a palace at the further end of the road."…

He lifted her from the chair. In the dead faint she was more an inconvenient burden than a heavy one.

At the curbing he sat her down while he returned for the lamp. The steps within were slippery, and he dared take no risks. To get her into the boat was trying: yet he was gentle as possible—that, however, was from regard for the patron he was serving. He laid her head against a seat, and arranged her garments respectfully.

"O sweet Mother of Blacherne!" he then said, looking at the face for the first time fully exposed. "That pin on the shoulder—Heavens, how the stone flashes! It invites me." Unfastening the trinket, he secured it under his jacket, then ran on: "She is so white! I must hurry—or drop her overboard. If she dies"—his countenance showed concern, but brightened immediately. "Oh, of course she jumped overboard to escape!"

There was no further delay. With the lamp at the bow, he pushed off, and rowed vigorously. Through the pillared space he went, with many quick turns. It were vain saying exactly which direction he took, or how long he was going; after a time, the more considerable on account of the obstructions to be avoided, he reached the raft heretofore described as in the form of a cross and anchored securely between four of the immense columns by which the roof of the cistern was upheld. Still Lael slept the merciful sleep.

Next the keeper carried the unresisting body to a door of what in the feeble light seemed a low, one–storied house—possibly hut were a better word—thence into an interior where the blackness may be likened to a blindfold many times multiplied. Yet he went to a couch, and laid her upon it.

"There—my part is done!" he muttered, with a long–drawn breath… "Now to illuminate the Palace! If she were to awake in this pitch–black"—something like a laugh interrupted the speech—"it would strangle her—oil from the press is not thicker."

He brought in the light—in such essential midnight it was indispensable, and must needs be always thought of—and amongst the things which began to sparkle was a circlet of furbished metal suspended from the centre of the ceiling. It proved to be a chandelier, provided with a number of lamps ready for lighting; and when they were all lit, the revelation

which ensued while a lesson in extravagance was not less a tribute to the good taste of the reckless genius by which it was conceived.

It were long reading the inventory of articles he had brought together there for the edification and amusement of such as might become his idols. They were everywhere apparently—books, pictures, musical instruments—on the floor, a carpet to delight a Sultana mother—over the walls, arras of silk and gold in alternate threads—the ceiling an elaboration of wooden panels.

By referring to the diagram of the raft, it will be seen one quarter was reserved for a landing, while the others supported what may be termed pavilions, leaving an interior susceptible of division into three rooms. Standing under the circlet of light, an inmate could see into the three open quarters, each designed and furnished for a special use; this at the right hand, for eating and drinking; that at the left, for sleeping; the third, opposite the door, for lounging and reading. In the first one, a table already set glittered with ware in glass and precious metals; in the second, a mass of pink plush and fairy–like lace bespoke a bed; in the third were chairs, a lounge, and footrests which had the appearance of having been brought from a Ptolemaic palace only yesterday; and on these, strewn with an eye to artistic effect, lay fans and shawls for which the harem–queens of Persia and Hindostan might have contended. The "crown–jewel" of this latter apartment, however, was undoubtedly a sheet of copper burnished to answer the purpose of a looking–glass with a full–length view. On stands next the mirror, was a collection of toilet necessaries.

Elsewhere we have heard of a Palace of Love lying as yet in the high intent of Mahommed; here we have a Palace of Pleasure illustrative of Epicureanism according to Demedes. The expense and care required to make it an actuality beget the inference that the float, rough outside, splendid within, was not for Lael alone. A Princess of India might inaugurate it, but others as fair and highborn were to come after her, recipients of the same worship. Whosoever the favorite of the hour might be, the three pavilions were certainly the assigned limits of her being; while the getting rid of her would be never so easy—the water flowing, no

one knew whence or whither, was horribly suggestive. Once installed there, it was supposed that longings for the upper world would go gradually out. The mistress, with nothing to wish for not at hand, was to be a Queen, with Demedes and his chosen of the philosophic circle for her ministers. In other words, the Academic Temple in the upper world was but a place of meeting; this was the Temple in fact. There the gentle priests talked business; here they worshipped; and of their psalter and litany, their faith and ceremonial practices, enough that the new substitute for religion was only a reembodiment of an old philosophy with the narrowest psychical idea for creed; namely, that the principle of Present Life was all there was in man worth culture and gratification.

The keeper cared little for the furnishments and curios. He was much more concerned in the restoration of his charge, being curious to see how she would behave on waking. He sprinkled her face with water, and fanned her energetically, using an ostrich wing of the whiteness of snow, overlaid about the handle with scarab–gems. Nor did he forget to pray.

"O Holy Mother! O sweet Madonna of Blacherne! Do not let her die. Darkness is nothing to thee. Thou art clothed in brightness. Oh, as thou lovest all thy children, descend hither, and open her eyes, and give her speech!"

The man was in earnest.

Greatly to his delight, he beheld the blood at length redden the pretty mouth, and the eyelids begin to tremble. Then a long, deep inhalation, and an uncertain fearful looking about; first at the circlet of the lamps, and next at the keeper, who, as became a pious Byzantine, burst into exclamation:

"Oh Holy Mother! I owe you a candle!"

Directly, having risen to a sitting posture, Lael found her tongue:

"You are not my father Uel, or my father the Prince of India?"

"No," he returned, plying the fan.

"Where are they? Where is Sergius?"

"I do not know."

"Who are you?"

"I am appointed to see that no harm comes to you."

This was intended kindly enough; it had, however, the opposite effect. She arose, and with both hands holding the hair from her eyes, stared wildly at objects in the three rooms, and fell to the couch again insensible. And again the water, the ostrich–wing, and the prayer to the Lady of Blacherne—again an awakening.

"Where am I?" she asked.

"In the Palace of"—

He had not time to finish; with tears, and moans, and wringing of hands she sat up: "Oh, my father! Oh, that I had heeded him!… You will take me to him, will you not? He is rich, and loves me, and he will give you gold and jewels until you are rich. Only take me to him… See—I am praying to you!"—and she cast herself at his feet.

Now the keeper was not used to so much loveliness in great distress, and he moved away; but she tried to follow him on her knees, crying: "Oh, as you hope mercy for yourself, take me home!" And beginning to doubt his strength, he affected harshness.

"It is useless praying to me. I could not take you out if your father rained gold on me for a month—I could not if I wished to… Be sensible, and listen to me."

"Then you did not bring me here."

"Listen to me, I say… You will get hungry and thirsty—there are bread, fruit, and water and wine—and when you are sleepy, yonder is the bed. Use your eyes, and you are certain to find in one room or the other everything you can need; and whatever you put hand on is yours. Only be sensible, and quit taking on so. Quit praying to me. Prayer is for the Madonna and the Blessed Saints. Hush and hear. No? Well, I am going now."

"Going?—and without telling me where I am? Or why I was brought here? Or by whom? Oh, my God!"

She flung herself on the floor distracted; and he, apparently not minding, went on:

"I am going now, but will come back for your orders in the morning, and again in the evening. Do not be afraid; it is not intended to hurt you; and if you get tired of yourself, there are books; or if you do not read, maybe you sing—there are musical instruments, and you can choose amongst them. Now I grant you I am not a waiting–maid, having had no education in that line; still, if I may advise, wash your face, and dress your hair, and be beautiful as you can, for by and by he will come"—

"Who will come?" she asked, rising to her knees, and clasping her hands.

The sight was more than enough for him. He fled incontinently, saying: "I will be back in the morning." As he went he snatched up the indispensable lamp; outside, he locked the door; then rowed away, repeating, "Oh, the blood of doves and the tears of women!"

Left thus alone, the unfortunate girl lay on the floor a long time, sobbing, and gradually finding the virtue there is in tears—especially tears of repentance. Afterwhile, with the return of reason—meaning power to think—the silence of the place became noticeable. Listening closely, she could detect no sign of life—nothing indicative of a street, or a house adjoining, or a neighbor, or that there was any outdoors about her at all. The noise of an insect, the note of a bird, a sough of wind, the gurgle of water, would have relieved her from the sense of having in some way fallen off the earth, and been caught by a far away uninhabited planet. That would certainly have been hard; but worse—the idea of being doomed to stay there took possession of her, and becoming intolerable, she walked from room to room, and even tried to take interest in the things around. Will it ever be that a woman can pass a mirror without being arrested by it? Before the tall copper plate she finally stopped. At first, the figure she saw startled her. The air of general discomfiture—hair loose, features tear–stained, eyes red and swollen, garments disarranged—made it look like a stranger. The notion exaggerated itself, and further on she found a positive comfort in the society of the image, which not only looked somebody else, but more and more somebody else who was lost like herself, and, being in the same miserable condition, would be happy to exchange sympathy for sympathy.

Now the spectacle of a person in distress is never pleasant; wherefore permission is begged to dismiss the passage of that night in the cistern briefly as possible. From the couch to the mirror; fearing now, then despairing; one moment calling for help, listening next, her distracted fancy caught by an imaginary sound; too much fevered to care for refreshments; so overwhelmed by the awful sense of being hopelessly and forever lost, she could neither sleep nor control herself mentally. Thus tortured, there were no minutes or hours to her, only a time, that being a peculiarity of the strange planet her habitat. To be sure, she explored her prison intent upon escape, but was as often beaten back by walls without window, loophole or skylight—walls in which there was but one door, fastened outside.

The day following was to the captive in nothing different from the night—a time divisionless, and filled with fear, suspense, and horrible imaginings—a monotony unbroken by a sound. If she could have heard a bell, though ever so faint, or a voice, to whomsoever addressed, it would yet prove her in an inhabited world—nay, could she but have heard a cricket singing!

In the morning the keeper kept his appointment. He came alone and without business except to renew the oil in the lamps. After a careful survey of the palace, as he called it, probably in sarcasm, and as he was about to leave, he offered, if she wanted anything, to bring it upon his return. Was there ever prisoner not in want of liberty? The proposal did but reopen the scene of the evening previous; and he fled from it, repeating as before, "Oh, the blood of doves and the tears of women!"

In the evening he found her more tractable; so at least he thought; and she was in fact quieter from exhaustion. None the less he again fled to escape the entreaties with which she beset him.

She took to the couch the second night. The need of nature was too strong for both grief and fear, and she slept. Of course she knew not of the hunt going on, or of the difficulties in the way of finding her; and in this ignorance the sensation of being lost gradually yielded to the more poignant idea of desertion. Where was Sergius? Would there ever be a

fitter opportunity for display of the superhuman intelligence with which, up to this time, she had invested her father, the Prince of India? The stars could tell him everything; so, if now they were silent respecting her, it could only be because he had not consulted them. Situations such as she was in are right quarters of the moon for unreasonable fantasies; and she fell asleep oppressed by a conviction that all the friendly planets, even Jupiter, for whose appearance she had so often watched with the delight of a lover, were hastening to their Houses to tell him where she was, but for some reason he ignored them.

Still later, she fell into a defiant sullenness, one of the many aspects of despair.

In this mood, while lying on the couch, she heard the sound of oars, and almost immediately after felt the floor jar. She sat up, wondering what had brought the keeper back so soon. Steps then approached the door; but the lock there proving troublesome, suggested one unaccustomed to it; whereupon she remembered the rude advice to wash her face and dress her hair, for by and by somebody was coming.

"Now," she thought, "I shall learn who brought me here, and why."

A hope returned to her.

"Oh, it may be my father has at last found me!"

She arose—a volume of joy gathered in her heart ready to burst into expression—when the door was pushed open, and Demedes entered.

We know the figure he thus introduced to her. With averted face he reinserted the key in the lock. She saw the key, heavy enough in emergency for an aggressive weapon—she saw a gloved hand turn it, and heard the bolt plunge obediently into its socket—and the flicker of hope went out. She sunk upon the couch again, sullenly observant.

The visitor—at first unrecognized by her—behaved as if at home, and confident of an agreeable reception. Having made the door safe on the outside, he next secured it inside, by taking the key out. Still averting his face, he went to the mirror, shook the great cloak from his shoulders, and coolly surveyed himself, turning this way and that. He rearranged his cape,

took off the cap, and, putting the plumes in better relation, restored it to his head—thrust his gloves on one side under a swordless belt, and the ponderous key under the same belt but on the other side, where it had for company a straight dagger of threatening proportions.

Lael kept watch on these movements, doubtful if the stranger were aware of her presence. Uncertainty on that score was presently removed. Turning from the mirror, he advanced slowly toward her. When under the circlet, just at the point where the light was most favorable for an exhibition of himself, he stopped, doffed the cap, and said to her:

"The daughter of the Prince of India cannot have forgotten me."

Now if, from something said in this chronicle, the reader has been led to exalt the little Jewess into a Bradamante, it were just to undeceive him. She was a woman in promise, of fair intellect subordinate to a pure heart. Any great thing said or done by her would be certain to have its origin in her affections. The circumstances in which she would be other than simple and unaffected are inconceivable. In the beautiful armor, Demedes was handsome, particularly as there was no other man near to force a comparison of stature; yet she did not see any of his braveries—she saw his face alone, and with what feeling may be inferred from the fact that she now knew who brought her where she was, and the purpose of the bringing.

Instead of replying, she shrank visibly further and further from him, until she was an apt reminder of a hare cornered by a hound, or a dove at last overtaken by a hawk.

The suffering she had undergone was discernible in her appearance, for she had not taken the advice of the keeper; in a word, she was at the moment shockingly unlike the lissome, happy, radiant creature whom we saw set out for a promenade two days before. Her posture was crouching; the hair was falling all ways; both hands pressed hard upon her bosom; and the eyes were in fixed gaze, staring at him as at death. She was in the last extremity of fear, and he could not but see it.

"Do not be afraid," he said, hurriedly, and in a tone of pity. "You were never safer than you are here—I swear it, O Princess!"

Observing no change in her or indication of reply, he continued: "I see your fear, and it may be I am its object. Let me come and sit by you, and I will explain everything—where you are—why you were brought here—and by whom… Or give me a place at your feet… I will not speak for myself, except as I love you—nay, I will speak for love."

Still not a word from her—only a sullenness in which he fancied there was a threat… A threat? What could she do? To him, nothing; he was in shirt of steel; but to herself much… And he thought of suicide, and then of—madness.

"Tell me, O Princess, if you have received any disrespect since you entered this palace? There is but one person from whom it could have proceeded. I know him; and if, against his solemn oath, he has dared an unseemly look or word—if he has touched you profanely—you may choose the dog's death he shall die, and I will give it him. For that I wear this dagger. See!"

In this he was sincere; yet he shall be a student very recently come to lessons in human nature who fails to perceive the reason of his sincerity; possibly she saw it; we speak with uncertainty, for she still kept silent. Again he cast about to make her speak. Reproach, abuse, rage, tears in torrents, fury in any form were preferable to that look, so like an animal's conscious of its last moment.

"Must I talk to you from this distance? I can, as you see, but it is cruel; and if you fear me"—he smiled, as if the idea were amusing. "Oh! if you still fear me, what is there to prevent my compelling the favors I beg?"

The menace was of no more effect than entreaty. Paralysis of spirit from fright was new to him; yet the resources of his wit were without end. Going to the table, he looked it over carefully.

"What!" he cried, turning to her with well–dissembled astonishment. "Hast thou eaten nothing? Two days, and not a crumb of bread in thy pretty throat?—not a drop of wine? This shall not go on—no, by all the goodness there is in Heaven!"

On a plate he then placed a biscuit and a goblet filled with red wine of the clearest sparkle, and taking them to her, knelt at her feet.

"I will tell you truly, Princess—I built this palace for you, and brought you here under urgency of love. God deny me forever, if I once dreamed of starving you! Eat and drink, if only to give me ease of conscience."

He offered the plate to her.

She arose, her face, if possible, whiter than before.

"Do not come near me—keep off!" Her voice was sharp and high. "Keep off!… Or take me to my father's house. This palace is yours—you have the key. Oh, be merciful!"

Madness was very near her.

"I will obey you in all things but one," he said, and returned the plate to the table, content with having brought her to speech. "In all things but one," he repeated peremptorily, standing under the circlet. "I will not take you to your father's house. I brought you here to teach you what I would never have a chance to teach you there—that you are the idol for whom I have dared every earthly risk, and imperilled my soul… Sit down and rest yourself. I will not come near you to–night, nor ever without your consent… Yes, that is well. And now you are seated, and have shown a little faith in my word—for which I thank you and kiss your hand—hear me further and be reasonable… You shall love me."

Into this declaration he flung all the passion of his nature.

"No, no! Draw not away believing yourself in peril. You shall love me, but not as a scourged victim. I am not a brute. I may be won too lightly, by a voice, by bright eyes, by graces of person, by faithfulness where faithfulness is owing, by a soul created for love and aglow with it as a star with light; but I am not of those who kill the beloved, and justify the deed, pleading coldness, scorn, preference for another. Be reasonable, I say, O Princess, and hear how I will conquer you… Are not the better years of life ours? Why should I struggle or make haste, or be impatient? Are you not where I have chosen to put you?—where I can visit you day and night to assure myself of your health and spirits?—all in the world, yet out of its sight?… You may not know what a physician Time is. I do. He has a medicine for almost every ailment of the mind, every distemper of the soul. He may not set my lady's broken finger, but he will knit it so, when

sound again, the hurt shall be forgotten. He drops a month—in extreme cases, a year or years—on a grief, or a bereavement, and it becomes as if it had never been. So he lets the sun in on prejudices and hates, and they wither, and where they were, we go and gather the fruits and flowers of admiration, respect—ay, Princess, of love. Now, in this cause, I have chosen Time for my best friend; he and I will come together, and stay"—

The conclusion of the speech must be left to the reader, for with the last word some weighty solid crashed against the raft until it trembled throughout. Demedes stopped. Involuntarily his hand sought the dagger; and the action was a confession of surprise. An interval of quiet ensued; then came a trial of the lock—at first, gentle—another, with energy—a third one rattled the strong leaf in its frame.

"The villain! I will teach him—No, it cannot be—he would not dare—and besides I have the boat."

As Demedes thus acquitted the keeper, he cast a serious glance around him, evidently in thought of defence.

Again the raft was shaken, as if by feet moving rapidly under a heavy burden. Crash!—and the door was splintered. Once more—crash!—and door and framework shot in—a thunderbolt had not wrought the wreck more completely.

Justice now to the Greek. Though a genius all bad, he was manly. Retiring to a position in front of Lael, he waited, dagger in hand. And he had not breathed twice, before Nilo thrust his magnificent person through the breach, and advanced under the circlet.

Returning now. Had the King been in toils, and hard pressed, he would not have committed himself to the flood and darkness of the cistern in the manner narrated; at least the probabilities are he would have preferred battle in the court, and light, though of the city on fire, by which to conquer or die. But his blood was up, and he was in pursuit, not at bay; to the genuine fighting man, moreover, a taste of victory is as a taste of blood to tigers. He was not in humor to bother himself with practical considerations such as—If I come upon the hiding–place of the Greek, how, being deaf and dumb, am I to know it? Of what use are eyes in a

hollow rayless as this? Whether he considered the obvious personal dangers of the adventure—drowning, for instance—is another matter.

The water was cold, and his teeth chattered; for it will be recollected he was astride the poles of the sedan, lashed together. That his body was half submerged was a circumstance he little heeded, since it was rather helpful than otherwise to the hand strokes with which he propelled himself. Nor need it be supposed he moved slowly. The speed attainable by such primitive means in still water is wonderful.

Going straight from the lower platform of the stair, he was presently in total darkness. With a row of columns on either hand, he managed to keep direction; and how constantly and eagerly he employed the one available sense left him may be imagined. His project was to push on until stayed by a boundary wall—then he would take another course, and so on to the end. The enemy, by his theory, was in a boat or floating house. Hopeful, determined, inspirited by the prospect of combat, he made haste as best he could. At last, looking over his left shoulder, he beheld a ruddy illumination, and changed direction thither. Presently he swept into the radius of a stationary light, broken, of course, by intervening pillars and the shadows they cast; then, at his right, a hand lamp in front of what had the appearance of a house rising out of the water, startled him.

Was it a signal?

The King approached warily, until satisfied no ambush was intended—until, in short, the palace of the Greek was before him.

It was his then to surprise; so he drove the ends of the poles against the landing with force sufficient, as we have seen, to interrupt Demedes explaining how he meant to compel the love of Lael.

With all his nicety of contrivance, the Greek had at the last moment forgotten to extinguish the lamp or take it into the house with him. The King recognized it and the boat, yet circumspectly drew his humble craft up out of the water. He next tried the lock, and then the door; finally he used the poles as a ram.

Taking stand under the circlet, there was scant room between it and the blue handkerchief on his head; while the figure he presented, nude to the

waist, his black skin glistening with water, his trousers clinging to his limbs, his nostrils dilating, his eyes jets of flame, his cruel white teeth exposed—this figure the dullest fancy can evoke—and it must have appeared to the guilty Greek a very genius of vengeance.

Withal, however, the armor and the dagger brought Demedes up to a certain equality; and, as he showed no flinching, the promise of combat was excellent. It happened, however, that while the two silently regarded each other, Lael recognized the King, and unable to control herself, gave a cry of joy, and started to him. Instinctively Demedes extended a hand to hold her back; the giant saw the opening; two steps so nearly simultaneous the movement was like a leap—and he had the wrist of the other's armed hand in his grip. Words can convey no idea of the outburst attending the assault—it was the hoarse inarticulate falsetto of a dumb man signalizing a triumph. If the reader can think of a tiger standing over him, its breath on his cheek, its roar in his ears, something approximate to the effect is possible.

The Greek's cap fell off, and the dagger rattled to the floor. His countenance knit with sudden pain—the terrible grip was crushing the bones—yet he did not submit. With the free hand, he snatched the key from his belt, and swung it to strike—the blow was intercepted—the key wrenched away. Then Demedes' spirit forsook him—mortal terror showed in his face turned gray as ashes, and in his eyes, enlarged yet ready to burst from their sockets. He had not the gladiator's resignation under judgment of death.

"Save me, O Princess, save me!… He is killing me… My God—see—hear —he is crushing my bones!… Save me!"

Lael was then behind the King, on her knees, thanking Heaven for rescue. She heard the imploration, and, woman–like, sight of the awful agony extinguished the memory of her wrongs.

"Spare him, Nilo, for my sake, spare him!" she cried.

It was not alone her wrongs that were forgotten—she forgot that the avenger could not hear.

Had he heard, it is doubtful if he had obeyed; for we again remark he was fighting less for her than for his master—or rather for her in his master's interest. And besides, it was the moment of victory, when, of all moments, the difference between the man born and reared under Christian influences and the savage is most impressible.

While she was entreating him, he repeated the indescribable howl, and catching Demedes bore him to the door and out of it. At the edge of the landing, he twisted his fingers in the long locks of the screaming wretch, whose boasted philosophy was of so little worth to him now that he never thought of it—then he plunged him in the water, and held him under until—enough, dear reader!

Lael did not go out. The inevitable was in the negro's face. Retreating to the couch, she there covered her ears with her hands, trying to escape the prayers the doomed man persisted to the last in addressing her.

By and by Nilo returned alone.

He took the cloak from the floor, wrapped her in it, and signed her to go with him; but the distresses she had endured, together with the horrors of the scene just finished, left her half fainting. In his arms she was a child. Almost before she knew it, he had placed her in the boat. With a cord found in the house, he tied the poles behind the vessel, and set out to find the stairs, the tell–tale lamp twinkling at the bow.

Safely arrived there, the good fellow carried his fair charge up the steps to the court—descending again, he brought the poles—going back once more, he drew the boat on the lower platform. Then to hasten to the street door, unbar it, and admit Sergius were scarce a minute's work.

The monk's amazement and delight at beholding Lael, and hers at sight of him, require no labored telling. At that meeting, conventionalities were not observed. He carried her into the passage, and gave her the keeper's chair; after which, reminded of the programme so carefully laid out by him, he returned with Nilo to the court, where the illumination in the sky still dropped its relucent flush. Turning the King face to him he asked:

"Where is the keeper?"

The King walked to the sedan, opened the door, and dragging the dead man forth, flung him sprawling on the pavement.

Sergius stood speechless, seeing what the victor had not—arrests, official inquests, and the dread machinery of the law started, with results not in foresight except by Heaven. Before he had fairly recovered, Nilo had the sedan out and the poles fixed to it, and in the most cheerful, matter–of–fact manner signed him to take up the forward ends.

"Where is the Greek?" the monk asked.

That also the King managed to answer.

"In the cistern—drowned!" exclaimed Sergius, converting the reply into words.

The King drew himself up proudly.

"O Heavens! What will become of us?"

The exclamation signified a curtain rising upon a scene of prosecution against which the Christian covered his face with his hands… Again Nilo brought him back to present duty… In a short time Lael was in the chair, and they bearing her off.

Sergius set out first for Uel's house. The time was near morning; but for the conflagration the indications of dawn might have been seen in the east. He was not long in getting to understand the awfulness of the calamity the city had suffered, and that, with thousands of others, the dwellings of Uel and the Prince of India were heaps of ashes on which the gale was expending its undiminished strength.

What was to be done with Lael?

This Sergius answered by leading the way to the town residence of the Princess Irene. There the little Jewess was received, while he took boat and hurried to Therapia.

The Princess came down, and under her roof, Lael found sympathy, rest, and safety. In due time also Uel's last testament reached her, with the purse of jewels left by the Prince of India, and she then assumed guardianship of the bereaved girl.

BOOK V

MIRZA

CHAPTER I

A COLD WIND FROM ADRIANOPLE

It is now the middle of February, 1451. Constantine has been Emperor a trifle over three years, and proven himself a just man and a conscientious ruler. How great he is remains for demonstration, since nothing has occurred to him—nothing properly a trial of his higher qualities.

In one respect the situation of the Emperor was peculiar. The highway from Gallipoli to Adrianople, passing the ancient capital on the south, belonged to the Turks, and they used it for every purpose—military, commercial, governmental—used it as undisputedly within their domain, leaving Constantine territorially surrounded, and with but one neighbor, the Sultan Amurath.

Age had transformed the great Moslem; from dreams of conquest, he had descended to dreams of peace in shaded halls and rose–sprent gardens, with singers, story–tellers, and philosophers for companions, and women, cousins of the houris, to carpet the way to Paradise; but for George Castriot,**[37]** he had abandoned the cimeter. Keeping terms of amity with such a neighbor was easy—the Emperor had merely to be himself peaceful. Moreover, when John Palaeologus died, the succession was disputed by Demetrius, a brother to Constantine. Amurath was chosen arbitrator, and he decided in favor of the latter, placing him under a bond of gratitude.

Thus secure in his foreign relations, the Emperor, on taking the throne, addressed himself to finding a consort; of his efforts in that quest the reader is already informed, leaving it to be remarked that the Georgian Princess at last selected for him by Phranza died while journeying to Constantinople. This, however, was business of the Emperor's own inauguration, and in point of seriousness could not stand comparison with another affair imposed upon him by inheritance—keeping the religious

factions domiciled in the capital from tearing each other to pieces. The latter called for qualities he does not seem to have possessed. He permitted the sectaries to bombard each other with sermons, bulletins and excommunications which, on the ground of scandal to religion, he should have promptly suppressed; his failure to do so led to its inevitable result—the sectaries presently dominated him.

Now, however, the easy administration of the hitherto fortunate Emperor is to vanish; two additional matters of the gravest import are thrust upon him simultaneously, one domestic, the other foreign; and as both of them become turning points in our story, it is advisable to attend to them here.

When the reins of government fell from the hands of Amurath, they were caught up by Mahommed; in other words, Mahommed is Sultan, and the old regime, with its friendly policies and stately courtesies, is at an end, imposing the necessity for a recast of the relations between the Empires. What shall they be? Such is the foreign question.

Obviously, the subject being of vital interest to the Greek, it was for him to take the initiative in bringing about the definitions desired. With keen appreciation of the danger of the situation he addressed himself to the task. Replying to a request presented through the ambassador resident at Adrianople, Mahommed gave him solemn assurances of his disposition to observe every existing treaty. The response seems to have made him over–confident. Into the gilded council chamber at Blacherne he drew his personal friends and official advisers, and heard them with patience and dignity. At the close of a series of deliberative sessions which had almost the continuity of one session, two measures met his approval. Of these, the first was so extraordinary it is impossible not to attribute its suggestion to Phranza, who, to the immeasurable grief and disgust of our friend the venerable Dean, was now returned, and in the exercise of his high office of Grand Chamberlain.

Allusion has been already made to the religious faith of the mother of Mahommed.**[38]** The daughter of a Servian prince, she is supposed to have been a Christian. After the interment of Amurath, she had been returned to her native land. Her age was about fifty. Clothed with full

powers, the Grand Chamberlain was despatched to Adrianople to propose a marriage between His Majesty, the Emperor, and the Sultana mother. The fears and uncertainties besetting the Greek must have been overwhelming.

The veteran diplomat was at the same time entrusted with another affair which one would naturally think called for much less delicacy in negotiation. There was in Constantinople then a refugee named Orchan, of whose history little is known beyond the fact that he was a grandson of Sultan Solyman. Sometime presumably in the reign of John Palaeologus, the Prince appeared in the Greek capital as a pretender to the Sultanate; and his claim must have had color of right, at least, since he became the subject of a treaty between Amurath and his Byzantine contemporary, the former binding himself to pay the latter an annual stipend in aspers in consideration of the detention of the fugitive.

With respect to this mysterious person, the time was favorable, in the opinion of the council, for demanding an increase of the stipend. Instructions concerning the project were accordingly delivered to Lord Phranza.

The High Commissioner was received with flattering distinction at Adrianople. He of course presented himself first to the Grand Vizier, Kalil Pacha, of whom the reader may take note, since, aside from his reappearances in these pages, he is a genuine historic character. To further acquaintance with him, it may be added that he was truly a veteran in public affairs, a member of the great family to which the vizierat descended almost in birthright, and a friend to the Greeks, most likely from long association with Amurath, although he has suffered severe aspersion on their account. Kalil advised Phranza to drop the stipend. His master, he said, was not afraid of Orchan, if the latter took the field as an open claimant, short work would be made of him. The warning was disregarded. Phranza submitted his proposals to Mahommed directly, and was surprised by his gentleness and suavity. There was no scene whatever. On the contrary, the marriage overture was forwarded to the Sultana with every indication of approval, nor was the demand touching the stipend rejected; it was simply deferred. Phranza lingered at the Turkish capital,

pleased with the attentions shown him, and still more with the character of the Sultan.

In the judgment of the Envoy the youthful monarch was the incarnation of peace. What time he was not mourning the loss of his royal father, he was studying designs for a palace, probably the Watch Tower of the World (*Jehan Numa*), which he subsequently built in Adrianople.

Well for the trusting master in Blacherne, well for Christianity in the East, could the credulous Phranza have looked in upon the amiable young potentate during one of the nights of his residence in the Moslem capital! He would have found him in a chamber of impenetrable privacy, listening while the Prince of India proved the calculations of a horoscope decisive of the favorable time for beginning war with the Byzantines.

"Now, my Lord," he could have heard the Prince say, when the last of the many tables had been refooted for the tenth time—"now we are ready for the ultimate. We are agreed, if I mistake not"—this was not merely a complimentary form of speech, for Mahommed, it should be borne in mind, was himself deeply versed in the intricate and subtle science of planetary prediction—"we are agreed that as thou art to essay the war as its beginner, we should have the most favorable Ascendant, determinable by the Lord, and the Planet or Planets therein or in conjunction or aspect with the Lord; we are also agreed that the Lord of the Seventh House is the Emperor of Constantinople; we are also agreed that to have thee overcome thy adversary, the Emperor, it is better to have the Ascendant in the House of one of the Superior Planets, Saturn, Jupiter or Mars"—

"Jupiter would be good, O Prince," said Mahommed, intensely interested, "yet I prefer Mars."

"My Lord is right again." The Seer hesitated slightly, then explained with a deferential nod and smile: "I was near saying my Lord is always right. Though some of the adepts have preferred Scorpio for the Ascendant, because it is a fixed sign, Mars pleases me best; wherefore toward him have I directed all my observations, seeking a time when he shall certainly be better fortified than the Lord of the Seventh House, as well as elevated above him in our figure of the Heavens."

Mahommed leaned far over toward the Prince, and said imperiously, his eyes singularly bright: "And the ultimate—the time, the time, O Prince! Hast thou found it? Allah forbid it be too soon!—There is so much to be done—so much of preparation."

The Prince smiled while answering:

"My Lord is seeing a field of glory—his by reservation of destiny—and I do not wonder at his impatience to go reaping in it; but" (he became serious) "it is never to be forgotten—no, not even by the most exalted of men—that the Planets march by order of Allah alone."… Then taking the last of the calculations from the table at his right hand, he continued: "The Ascendant permits my Lord to begin the war next year."

Mahommed heard with hands clinched till the nails seemed burrowing in the flesh of the palms.

"The day, O Prince!—the day—the hour!" he exclaimed.

Looking at the calculation, the Prince appeared to reply from it: "At four o'clock, March twenty–sixth"—

"And the year?"

"Fourteen hundred and fifty–two."

"*Four o'clock, March twenty–sixth, fourteen hundred and fifty–two*," Mahommed repeated slowly, as if writing and verifying each word. Then he cried with fervor: "There is no God but God!"

Twice he crossed the floor; after which, unwilling probably to submit himself at that moment to observation by any man, he returned to the Prince:

"Thou hast leave to retire; but keep within call. In this mighty business who is worthier to be the first help of my hands than the Messenger of the Stars?"

The Prince saluted and withdrew.

At length Phranza wearied of waiting, and being summoned home left the two affairs in charge of an ambassador instructed to forego no opportunity which might offer to press them to conclusions. Afterwhile Mahommed went into Asia to suppress an insurrection in Caramania. The

Greek followed him from town to camp, until, tiring of the importunity, the Sultan one day summoned him to his tent.

"Tell my excellent friend, the Lord of Constantinople, thy master, that the Sultana Maria declines his offer of marriage."

"Well, my Lord," said the ambassador, touched by the brevity of the communication, "did not the great lady deign an explanation?"

"She declined—that is all."

The ambassador hurried a courier to Constantinople with the answer. For the first time he ventured to express a doubt of the Turk's sincerity.

He would have been a wiser man and infinitely more useful to his sovereign, could he have heard Mahommed again in colloquy with the Prince of India.

"How long am I to endure this dog of a *Gabour?*"**[39]** asked the Sultan, angrily. "It was not enough to waylay me in my palace; he pursued me into the field; now he imbitters my bread, now at my bedside he drives sleep from me, now he begrudges me time for prayer. How long, I say?"

The Prince answered quietly: "Until March twenty–sixth, fourteen hundred and fifty–two."

"But if I put him to sleep, O Prince?"

"His master will send another in his place."

"Ah, but the interval! Will it not be so many days of rest?—so many nights of unbroken sleep?"

"Has my Lord finished his census yet? Are his arsenals full? Has he his ships, and sailors, and soldiers? Has he money according to the estimate?"

"No."

"My Lord has said he must have cannon. Has he found an artificer to his mind?"

Mahommed frowned.

"I will give my Lord a suggestion. Does it suit him to reply now to the proposal of marriage, keeping the matter of the stipend open, he may give

half relief and still hold the Emperor, who stands more in need of bezants than of a consort."

"Prince," said Mahommed, quickly, "as you go out send my secretary in."

"Despatch a messenger for the ambassador of my brother of Constantinople. I will see him immediately."

This to the secretary.

And presently the ambassador had the matter for report above recited. In the report he might have said with truth—a person styling himself *Prince of India* has risen to be Grand Vizier in fact, leaving the title to Kalil.

These negotiations, lamentably barren of good results, were stretched through half the year. But it is necessary to leave them for the time, that we may return and see if the Emperor had better success in the management of the domestic problem referred to as an inheritance.

CHAPTER II

A FIRE FROM THE HEGUMEN'S TOMB

The great fire burned its way broadly over two hills of the city, stopping at the wall of the garden on the eastern front of Blacherne. How it originated, how many houses were destroyed, how many of the people perished in the flames and in the battle waged to extinguish them, were subjects of unavailing inquiry through many days.

For relief of the homeless, Constantine opened his private coffers. He also assumed personal direction of the removal of the debris cumbering the unsightly blackened districts, and, animated by his example, the whole population engaged zealously in the melancholy work. When Galata, laying her jealousies aside, contributed money and sent companies of laborers over to the assistance of her neighbor, it actually seemed as if the long–forgotten age of Christian brotherhood was to be renewed. But, alas! This unity, bred of so much suffering, so delightful as a rest from factious alarms, so suggestive of angelic society and heavenly conditions in general, disappeared—not slowly, but almost in a twinkling.

It was afternoon of the second day after the fire. Having been on horseback since early morning, the Emperor, in need of repose, had returned to his palace; but met at the portal by an urgent request for audience from the Princess Irene, he received her forthwith. The reader can surmise the business she brought for consideration, and also the amazement with which her royal kinsman heard of the discovery and rescue of Lael. For a spell his self–possession forsook him. In anticipation of the popular excitement likely to be aroused by the news, he summoned his councillors, and after consultation, appointed a commission to investigate the incident, first sending a guard to take possession of the cistern.

Like their master, the commissioners had never heard of the first profanation of the ancient reservoir; as a crime, consequently, this repetition was to them original in all its aspects, and they addressed themselves to the inquiry incredulously; but after listening to Sergius, and to the details the little Jewess was able to give them, the occurrence forced itself on their comprehension as more than a crime at law—it took on the proportions and color of a conspiracy against society and religion. Then its relative consequences presented themselves. Who were concerned in it?

The name of Demedes startled them by suddenly opening a wide horizon of conjecture. Some were primarily disposed to welcome the intelligence for the opportunity it offered His Majesty to crush the Academy of Epicurus, but a second thought cooled their ardor; insomuch that they began drawing back in alarm. The Brotherhood of the St. James' was powerful, and it would certainly resent any humiliation their venerable Hegumen might sustain through the ignominious exposure of his son.

In great uncertainty, and not a little confusion, the commissionate body hied from the Princess Irene to the cistern. While careful to hide it from his associates, each of them went with a scarce admitted hope that there would be a failure of the confirmations at least with respect to the misguided Demedes; and not to lose sight of Nilo, in whom they already discerned a serviceable scapegoat, they required him to go with them.

The revelations call for a passing notice. In the court the body of the keeper was found upon the pavement. The countenance looked the terror of which the man died, and as a spectacle grimly prepared the beholders for the disclosures which were to follow.

There was need of resolution to make the dismal ferriage from the lower platform in the cistern, but it was done, Nilo at the oars. When the visitors stepped on the landing of the "palace," their wonder was unbounded. When they passed through the battered doorway, and standing under the circlet, in which the lights were dead, gazed about them, they knew not which was most astonishing, the courage of the majestic black or the audacity of the projector of the villanous scheme. But where was he? We may be sure there was no delay in the demand for him. While the fishing tongs were

being brought, the apartments were inspected, and a list of their contents made. Then the party collected at the edge of the landing. The secret hope was faint within them, for the confirmations so far were positive, and the terrible negro, not in the least abashed, was showing them where his enemy went down. They gave him the tongs, and at the first plunge he grappled the body, and commenced raising it. They crowded closer around him, awe–struck yet silently praying: Holy Mother, grant it be any but the Hegumen's son! A white hand, the fingers gay with rings, appeared above the water. The fisherman took hold of it, and with a triumphant smile, drew the corpse out, and laid it face up for better viewing. The garments were still bright, the gilded mail sparkled bravely. One stooped with the light, and said immediately:

"It is he—Demedes!"

Then the commissioners looked at each other—there was no need of speech—a fortunate thing, for at that instant there was nothing of which they were more afraid.

Avoidance of the dreaded complications was now impossible—so at least it seemed to them. Up in the keeper's room, whither they hurriedly adjourned, it was resolved to despatch a messenger to His Majesty with an informal statement of the discoveries, and a request for orders. The unwillingness to assume responsibility was natural.

Constantine acted promptly, and with sharp discernment of the opportunity afforded the mischief–makers. The offence was to the city, and it should see the contempt in which the conspirators held it, the danger escaped, and the provocation to the Most Righteous; if then there were seditions, his conscience was acquit. He sent Phranza to break the news to the Hegumen, and went in person to the Monastery, arriving barely in time to receive the blessings of his reverend friend, who, overcome by the shock, died in his arms. Returning sadly to Blacherne, he ordered the corpses of the guilty men to be exposed for two days before the door of the keeper's house, and the cistern thrown open for visitation by all who desired to inspect the Palace of Darkness, as he appropriately termed the floating tenement constructed with such wicked intents. He also issued a

proclamation for the suppression of the Epicurean Academy, and appointed a day of Thanksgiving to God for the early exposure of the conspiracy. Nilo he sent to a cell in the Cynegion, ostensibly for future trial, but really to secure him from danger; in his heart he admired the King's spirit, and hoped a day would come when he could safely and suitably reward him.

On the part of the people the commotion which ensued was extraordinary. They left the fire to its smouldering, and in steady currents marched past the ghastly exhibits prepared for them in the street, looked at them, shuddered, crossed themselves, and went their ways apparently thankful for the swiftness of the judgment which had befallen; nor was there one heard to criticise the Emperor's course. The malefactors were dropped, like unclean clods, into the earth at night, without ceremony or a mourner in attendance. Thus far all well.

At length the day of thanksgiving arrived. By general agreement, there was not a sign of dissatisfaction to be seen. The most timorous of the commissioners rested easy. Sancta Sophia was the place appointed for the services, and Constantine had published his intention to be present. He had donned the Basilean robes; his litter was at the door of the palace; his guard of horse and foot was formed, when the officer on duty at the gate down by the Port of Blacherne arrived with a startling report.

"Your Majesty," he said, unusually regardless of the ancient salutation, "there is a great tumult in the city."

The imperial countenance became stern.

"This is a day of thanks to God for a great mercy; who dares profane it by tumult?"

"I must speak from hearsay," the officer answered… "The funeral of the Hegumen of the St. James took place at daylight this morning"—

"Yes," said Constantine, sighing at the sad reminder, "I had intended to assist the Brotherhood. But proceed."

"The Brothers, with large delegations from the other Monasteries, were assembled at the tomb, when Gennadius appeared, and began to preach,

and he wrought upon his hearers until they pushed the coffin into the vault, and dispersed through the streets, stirring up the people."

At this the Emperor yielded to his indignation.

"Now, by the trials and sufferings of the Most Christian Mother, are we beasts insensible to destruction? Or idiots exempt from the penalties of sin and impiety? And he—that genius of unrest—that master of foment— God o' Mercy, what has he laid hold of to lead so many better men to betray their vows and the beads at their belts? Tell me—speak—my patience is nearly gone."

For an instant, be it said, the much tried Sovereign beheld a strong hand move within reach, as offering itself for acceptance. No doubt he saw it as it was intended, the symbol and suggestion of a policy. Pity he did not take it! For then how much of mischance had been averted from himself—Constantinople might not have been lost to the Christian world—the Greek Church had saved its integrity by recognizing the union with the Latins consummated at the Council of Florence—Christianity had not been flung back for centuries in the East, its birthplace.

"Your Majesty," the officer returned, "I can report what I heard, leaving its truth to investigation… In his speech by the tomb Gennadius admitted the awfulness of the crime attempted by Demedes, and the justice of the punishment the young man suffered, its swiftness proving it to have been directed by Heaven; but he declared its conception was due to the Academy of Epicurus, and that there remained nothing deserving study and penance except the continued toleration without which the ungodly institution had passed quickly, as plagues fly over cities purified against them. The crime, he said, was ended. Let the dead bury the dead. But who were they responsible for grace to the Academy? And he answered himself, my Lord, by naming the Church and the State."

"Ah! He attacked the Church then?"

"No, my Lord, he excused it by saying it had been debauched by an *azymite* Patriarch, and while that servant of prostitution and heresy controlled it, wickedness would be protected and go on increasing."

"And the State—how dealt he with the State?"

"The Church he described as Samson; the Patriarch, as an uncomely Delilah who had speciously shorn it of its strength and beauty; the State, as a political prompter and coadjutor of the Delilah; and Rome, a false God seeking to promote worship unto itself through the debased Church and State."

"God o' Mercy!" Constantine exclaimed, involuntarily signing to the sword–bearer at his back; but recovering himself, he asked with forced moderation: "To the purpose of it all—the object. What did he propose to the Brothers?"

"He called them lovers of God in the livery of Christ, and implored them to gird up their loins, and stand for the religion of the Fathers, lest it perish entirely."

"Did he tell them what to do?"

"Yes, my Lord."

A wistful, eager look appeared on the royal face, and behind it an expectation that now there would be something to justify arrest and exile at least—something politically treasonable.

"He referred next to the thanksgiving services appointed to–day in Sancta Sophia, and declared it an opportunity from Heaven, sent them and all the faithful in the city, to begin a crusade for reform; not by resort to sword and spear, for they were weapons of hell, but by refusing to assist the Patriarch with their presence. A vision had come to him in the night, he said—an angel of the Lord with the Madonna of Blacherne—advising him of the Divine will. Under his further urgency— and my Lord knows his power of speech—the Brothers listening, the St. James' and all present from the other Orders, broke up and took to the streets, where they are now, exhorting the people not to go to the Church, and there is reason to believe they will"—

"Enough," said the Emperor, with sudden resolution. "The good Gregory shall not pray God singly and alone."

Turning to Phranza, he ordered him to summon the court for the occasion. "Let not one stay away," he continued; "and they shall put on

their best robes and whole regalia; for, going in state myself, I have need of their utmost splendor. It is my will, further, that the army be drawn from their quarters to the Church, men, music, and flags, and the navies from their ships. And give greeting to the Patriarch, and notify him, lest he make haste. Aside from these preparations, I desire the grumblers be left to pursue their course unmolested. The sincere and holy amongst them will presently have return of clear light."

This counter project was entered upon energetically.

Shortly after noon the military bore down to the old Church, braying the streets with horns, drums and cymbals, and when they were at order in the immense auditorium, their banners hanging unfurled from the galleries, the Emperor entered, with his court; in a word, the brave, honest, white–haired Patriarch had company multitudinous and noble as he could desire. None the less, however, Gennadius had his way also—*the people took no part in the ceremony*.

After the celebration, Constantine, in his chambers up in Blacherne, meditated upon the day and its outcome. Phranza was his sole attendant.

"My dear friend," the Emperor began, breaking a long silence, and much disquieted, "was not my predecessor, the first Constantine, beset with religious dissensions?"

"If we may credit history, my Lord, he certainly was."

"How did he manage them?"

"He called a Council."

"A Council truly—was that all?"

"I do not recollect anything more."

"It was this way, I think. He first settled the faith, and then provided against dispute."

"How, my Lord?"

"Well, there was one Arius, a Libyan, Presbyter of a little church in Alexandria called Baucalis, preacher of the Unity of God"—

"I remember him now."

"Of the Unity of God as opposed to the Trinity. Him the first Constantine sent to prison for life, did he not?"

Thereupon Phranza understood the subject of his master's meditation; but being of a timid soul, emasculated by much practice of diplomacy, usually a tedious, waiting occupation, he hastened to reply: "Even so, my Lord. Yet he could afford to be heroic. He had consolidated the Church, and was holding the world in the hollow of his hand."

Constantine allowed a sigh to escape him, and lapsed into silence; when next he spoke, it was to say slowly:

"Alas, my dear friend! The people were not there"—meaning at Sancta Sophia. "I fear, I fear"—

"What, my Lord?"

Another sigh deeper than the first one: "I fear I am not a statesman, but only a soldier, with nothing to give God and my Empire except a sword and one poor life."

These details will help the reader to a fair understanding of the domestic involvements which overtook the Emperor about the time Mahommed ascended the Turkish throne, and they are to be considered in addition to the negotiations in progress with the Sultan. And as it is important to give an idea of their speeding, we remark further, that from the afternoon of the solemnity in Sancta Sophia the discussion then forced upon him went from bad to worse, until he was seriously deprived both of popular sympathy and the support of the organized religious orders. The success of the solemnity in point of display, and the measures resorted to, were not merely offensive to Gennadius and his ally, the Duke Notaras; they construed them as a challenge to a trial of strength, and so vigorously did they avail themselves of their advantages that, before the Emperor was aware of it, there were two distinct parties in the city, one headed by Gennadius, the other by himself and Gregory the Patriarch.

Month by month the bitterness intensified; month by month the imperial party fell away until there was little of it left outside the court and the army and navy, and even they were subjected to incessant inroads— until, finally, it came to pass that the Emperor was doubtful whom to trust.

Thereupon, of course, the season for energetic repressive measures vanished, never to return.

Personalities, abuse, denunciation, lying, and sometimes downright blows took the place of debate in the struggle. One day religion was an exciting cause; next day, politics. Throughout it all, however, Gennadius was obviously the master–spirit. His methods were consummately adapted to the genius of the Byzantines. By confining himself strictly to the Church wrangle, he avoided furnishing the Emperor pretexts for legal prosecution; at the same time he wrought with such cunning that in the monasteries the very High Residence of Blacherne was spoken of as a den of *azymites*, while Sancta Sophia was abandoned to the Patriarch. To be seen in the purlieus of the latter was a signal for vulgar anathemas and social ostracism. His habits meantime were of a sort to make him a popular idol. He grew, if possible, more severely penitential; he fasted and flagellated himself; he slept on the stony floor before his crucifix; he seldom issued from his cell, and when visited there, was always surprised at prayers, the burden of which was forgiveness for signing the detested Articles of Union with the Latins. The physical suffering he endured was not without solace; he had heavenly visions and was attended by angels. If in his solitude he fainted, the Holy Virgin of Blacherne ministered to him, and brought him back to life and labor. First an ascetic, then a Prophet—such was his progression.

And Constantine was a witness to the imposture, and smarted under it; still he held there was nothing for him but to temporize, for if he ordered the seizure and banishment of the all–powerful hypocrite, he could trust no one with the order. The time was dark as a starless night to the high–spirited but too amiable monarch, and he watched and waited, or rather watched and drifted, extending confidence to but two counsellors, Phranza and the Princess Irene. Even in their company he was not always comfortable, for, strange to say, the advice of the woman was invariably heroic, and that of the man invariably weak and accommodating.

From this sketch the tendencies of the government can be right plainly estimated, leaving the suspicion of a difference between the first

Constantine and the last to grow as the evils grew.

CHAPTER III

MIRZA DOES AN ERRAND FOR MAHOMMED

Vegetation along the Bosphorus was just issuing from what may be called its budded state. In the gardens and protected spots on the European side white and yellow winged butterflies now and then appeared without lighting, for as yet there was nothing attractive enough to keep them. Like some great men of whom we occasionally hear, they were in the world before their time. In other words the month of May was about a week old, and there was a bright day to recommend it—bright, only a little too much tinctured with March and April to be all enjoyable. The earth was still spongy, the water cold, the air crisp, and the sun deceitful.

About ten o'clock in the morning Constantinopolitans lounging on the sea–wall were surprised by explosive sounds from down the Marmora. Afterwhile they located them, so to speak, on a galley off St. Stephano. At stated intervals, pale blue smoke would burst from the vessel, followed by a hurry–skurry of gulls in the vicinity, and then the roar, muffled by distance. The age of artillery had not yet arrived; nevertheless, cannon were quite well known to fame. Enterprising traders from the West had sailed into the Golden Horn with samples of the new arm on their decks; they were of such rude construction as to be unfit for service other than saluting.**[40]** So, now, while the idlers on the wall were not alarmed, they were curious to make out who the extravagant fellows were, and waited for the flag to tell them.

The stranger passed swiftly, firing as it went; and as the canvas was new and the hull freshly painted in white, it rode the waves to appearances a very beautiful "thing of life;" but the flag told nothing of its nationality. There were stripes on it diagonally set, green, yellow, and red, the yellow in the middle.

"The owners are not Genoese"—such was the judgment on the wall.

"No, nor Venetian, for that is not a lion in the yellow."

"What, then, is it?"

Pursued thus, the galley, at length rounding Point Serail (Demetrius), turned into the harbor. When opposite the tower of Galata, a last salute was fired from her deck; then the two cities caught up the interest, and being able to make out decisively that the sign in the yellow field of the flag was but a coat–of–arms, they said emphatically:

"It is not a national ship—only a great Lord;" and thereupon the question became self–inciting:

"Who is he?"

Hardly had the anchor taken hold in the muddy bed of the harbor in front of the port of Blacherne, before a small boat put off from the strange ship, manned by sailors clad in flowing white trousers, short sleeveless jackets, and red turbans of a style remarkable for amplitude. An officer, probably the sailing–master, went with them, and he, too, was heavily turbaned. A gaping crowd on the landing received the visitor when he stepped ashore and asked to see the captain of the guard. To that dignitary he delivered a despatch handsomely enveloped in yellow silk, saying, in imperfect Greek:

"My Lord, just arrived, prays you to read the enclosure, and send it forward by suitable hand. He trusts to your knowledge of what the proprieties require. He will await the reply on his galley."

The sailing–master saluted profoundly, resumed seat in his boat, and started back to the ship, leaving the captain of the guard to open the envelope and read the communication, which was substantially as follows:

"From the galley, St. Agostino, May 5, Year of our Blessed Saviour, 1451."

"The undersigned is a Christian Noble of Italy, more particularly from his strong Castle Corti on the eastern coast of Italy, near the ancient city of Brindisi. He offers lealty to His Most Christian Majesty, the Emperor of Constantinople, Defender of the Faith according to the crucified Son of God (to whom be honor and praise forevermore), and humbly represents

that he is a well–knighted soldier by profession, having won his spurs in battle, and taken the accolade from the hand of Calixtus the Third, Bishop of Rome, and, yet more worthily, His Holiness the Pope: that the time being peaceful in his country, except as it was rent by baronial feuds and forays not to his taste, he left it in search of employment and honors abroad; that he made the pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre first, and secured there a number of precious relics, which he is solicitous of presenting to His Imperial Majesty; that from long association with the Moslems, whom Heaven, in its wisdom impenetrable to the understanding of men, permits to profane the Holy Land with their presence and wicked guardianship, he acquired a speaking knowledge of the Arabic and Turkish languages; that he engaged in warfare against those enemies of God, having the powerful sanction therefor of His Holiness aforesaid, by whose direction he occupied himself chiefly with chastising the Berber pirates of Tripoli, from whom he took prisoners, putting them at his oars, where some of them now are. With the august city of Byzantium he has been acquainted many years through report, and, if its fame be truly published, he desires to reside in it, possibly to the end of his days. Wherefore he presumes to address this his respectful petition, praying its submission to His Most Christian Majesty, that he may be assured if the proposal be agreeable to the royal pleasure, and in the meantime have quiet anchorage for his galley."

UGO, COUNT CORTI.""

In the eyes of the captain of the guard the paper was singular, but explicit; moreover, the request seemed superfluous, considering the laxity prevalent with respect to the coming and going of persons of all nativities and callings. To be sure, trade was not as it used to be, and, thanks to the enterprise and cunning of the Galatanese across the harbor, the revenues from importations were sadly curtailed; still the old city had its markets, and the world was welcome to them. The argument, however, which silenced the custodian's doubt was, that of the few who rode to the gates in their own galleys and kept them there ready to depart if their reception were in the least chilling, how many signed themselves as did this one? Italian counts were famous fighters, and generally had audiences wherever

they knocked. So he concluded to send the enclosure up to the Palace without the intermediation of the High Admiral, a course which would at least save time.

While the affair is thus pending, we may return to Count Corti, and say an essential word or two of him.

The cannon, it is to be remarked, was not the only novelty of the galley. Over the stern, where the aplustre cast its shadow in ordinary crafts, there was a pavilion–like structure, high–raised, flat–roofed, and with small round windows in the sides. Quite likely the progressive ship–builders at Palos and Genoa would have termed the new feature a cabin. It was beyond cavil an improvement; and on this occasion the proprietor utilized it as he well might. Since the first gun off St. Stephano, he had held the roof, finding it the best position to get and enjoy a view of the capital, or rather of the walls and crowned eminences they had so long and all–sufficiently defended. A chair had been considerately brought up and put at his service, but in witness of the charm the spectacle had for him from the beginning, he did not once resort to it.

If only to save ourselves description of the man, and rescue him from a charge of intrusion into the body of our story, we think it better to take the reader into confidence at once, and inform him that Count Corti is in fact our former acquaintance Mirza, the Emir of the Hajj. The difference between his situation now, and when we first had sight of him on his horse under the yellow flag in the valley of Zaribah is remarkable; yet he is the same in one particular at least—he was in armor then, and he is still in armor—that is, he affects the same visorless casque, with its cape of fine rings buckled under the chin, the same shirt and overalls of pliable mail, the same shoes of transverse iron scales working into each other telescopically when the feet are in movement, the same golden spurs, and a surcoat in every particular like the Emir's, except it is brick–dust red instead of green. And this constancy in armor should not be accounted a vanity; it was a habit acquired in the school of arms which graduated him, and which he persisted in partly for the inurement, and partly as a mark of respect for Mahommed, with whom the gleam and clink of steel well

fashioned and gracefully worn was a passion, out of which he evolved a suite rivalling those kinsmen of the Buccleuch who—

"—quitted not their harness bright, Neither by day nor yet by night."

Returning once again. It was hoped when Mirza was first introduced that every one who might chance to spend an evening over these pages would perceive the possibilities he prefigured, and adopt him as a favorite; wherefore the interest may be more pressing to know what he, an Islamite supposably without guile, a Janissary of rank, lately so high in his master's confidence, is doing here, offering lealty to the Most Christian Emperor, and denouncing the followers of the Prophet as enemies of God. The appearances are certainly against him.

The explanation due, if only for coherence in our narrative, would be clearer did the reader review the part of the last conversation in the White Castle between the Prince of India and Mahommed, in which the latter is paternally advised to study the Greek capital, and keep himself informed of events within its walls. Yet, inasmuch as there is a current in reading which one once fairly into is loath to be pushed out of, we may be forgiven for quoting a material passage or two… "There is much for my Lord to do"—the Prince says, speaking to his noble eleve. "It is for him to think and act as if Constantinople were his capital temporarily in possession of another… It is for him to learn the city within and without; its streets and edifices; its hills and walls; its strong and weak places; its inhabitants, commerce, foreign relations; the character of its ruler, his resources and policies; its daily events; its cliques, clubs, and religious factions; especially is it for him to foment the differences Latin and Greek already a fire which has long been eating out to air in an inflammable house."… Mahommed, it will be recollected, acceded to the counsel, and in discussing the selection of a person suitable for the secret agency, the Prince said:… "He who undertakes it should enter Constantinople and live there above suspicion. He must be crafty, intelligent, courtly in manner, accomplished in arms, of high rank, and with means to carry his state bravely; for not only ought he to be conspicuous in the Hippodrome; he should be welcome in the salons and palaces; along with other facilities,

he must be provided to buy service in the Emperor's bedroom and council chamber—nay, at his elbow. Mature of judgment, it is of prime importance that he possess my Lord's confidence unalterably."… And when the ambitious Turk demanded: "The man, Prince, the man!"—the wily tutor responded: "My Lord has already named him."— "I?"—"Only to–night my Lord spoke of him as a marvel."—"Mirza?"… The Jew then proceeded: "Despatch him to Italy; let him appear in Constantinople, embarked from a galley, habited like an Italian, and with a suitable Italian title. He speaks Italian already, is fixed in his religion, and in knightly honor. Not all the gifts at the despot's disposal, nor the blandishments of society can shake his allegiance—he worships my Lord."…

Mahommed demurred to the proposal, saying: "So has Mirza become a part of me, I am scarcely myself without him."

Now he who has allowed himself to become interested in the bright young Emir, and pauses to digest these excerpts, will be aware of a grave concern for him. He foresees the outcome of the devotion to Mahommed dwelt upon so strongly by the Prince of India. An order to undertake the secret service will be accepted certainly as it is given. The very assurance that it will be accepted begets solicitude in the affair. Did Mahommed decide affirmatively? What were the instructions given? Having thus settled the coherences, we move on with the narrative.

It will be remembered, further, that close after the departure of the Princess Irene from the old Castle, Mahommed followed her to Therapia, and, as an Arab story–teller, was favored with an extended private audience in which he extolled himself to her at great length, and actually assumed the role of a lover. What is yet more romantic, he came away a lover in fact.

The circumstance is not to be lightly dismissed, for it was of immeasurable effect upon the fortunes of the Emir, and—if we can be excused for connecting an interest so stupendous with one so comparatively trifling—the fate of Constantinople. Theretofore the Turk's ambition had been the sole motive of his designs against that city, and, though vigorous, driving, and possibly enough of itself to have pushed him

on, there might yet have been some delay in the achievement. Ambition derived from genius is cautious in its first movements, counts the cost, ponders the marches to be made and the means to be employed, and is at times paralyzed by the simple contemplation of failure; in other words, dread of loss of glory is not seldom more powerful than the hope of glory. After the visit to Therapia, however, love reenforced ambition; or rather the two passions possessed Mahommed, and together they murdered his sleep. He became impatient and irritable; the days were too short, the months too long. Constantinople absorbed him. He thought of nothing else waking, and dreamed of nothing else. Well for him his faith in astrology, for by it the Prince of India was able to hold him to methodic preparation.

There were times when he was tempted to seize the Princess, and carry her off. Her palace was undefended, and he had but to raid it at night. Why not? There were two reasons, either of them sufficient: first, the stern old Sultan, his father, was a just man, and friendly to the Emperor Constantine; but still stronger, and probably the deterrent in fact, he actually loved the Princess with a genuine romantic sentiment, her happiness an equal motive—loved her for herself—a thing perfectly consistent, for in the Oriental idea there is always One the Highest.

Now, it was very lover–like in Mahommed, his giving himself up to thought of the Princess while gliding down the Bosphorus, after leaving his safeguard on her gate. He closed his eyes against the mellow light on the water, and, silently admitting her the perfection of womanhood, held her image before him until it was indelible in memory—face, figure, manner, even her dress and ornaments—until his longing for her became a positive hunger of soul.

As if to give us an illustration of the mal–apropos in coincidence, his august father had selected a bride for him, and he was on the road to Adrianople to celebrate the nuptials when he stopped at the White Castle. The maiden chosen was of a noble Turkish family, but harem born and bred. She might be charming, a very queen in the Seraglio; but, alas! the kinswoman of the Christian Emperor had furnished a glimpse of attractions which the fiancee to whom he was going could never attain—

attractions of mind and manner more lasting than those of mere person; and as he finished the comparison, he beat his breast, and cried out: "Ah, the partiality of the Most Merciful! To clothe this Greek with all the perfections, and deny her to me!"

Withal, there was a method in Mahommed's passion. Setting his face sternly against violating his own safeguard by abducting the Princess, he fell into revision of her conversation; and then a light broke in upon him—a light and a road to his object.

He recalled with particularity her reply to the message delivered to her, supposably from himself, containing his avowal that he loved her the more because she was a Christian, and singled out of it these words:… "A wife I might become, not from temptation of gain or power, or in surrender to love—I speak not in derision of the passion, since, like the admitted virtues, it is from God—nay, Sheik, in illustration of what may otherwise be of uncertain meaning to him, tell Prince Mahommed I might become his wife could I, by so doing, save or help the religion I profess."

This he took to pieces… "'She might become a wife.' Good!… 'She might become my wife'—on condition… What condition?"… He beat his breast again, this time with a laugh.

The rowers looked at him in wonder. What cared he for them? He had discovered a way to make her his… "Constantinople is the Greek Church," he muttered, with flashing eyes. "I will take the city for my own glory—to her then the glory of saving the Church! On to Constantinople!"

And from that moment the fate of the venerable metropolis may be said to have been finally sealed.

Within an hour after his return to the White Castle, he summoned Mirza, and surprised him by the exuberance of his joy. He threw his arm over the Emir's shoulder, and walked with him, laughing and talking, like a man in wine. His nature was of the kind which, for the escape of feeling, required action as well as words. At length he sobered down.

"Here, Mirza," he said. "Stand here before me… Thou lovest me, I believe?"

Mirza answered upon his knee: "My Lord has said it."

"I believe thee… Rise and take pen and paper, and write, standing here before me."**[41]**

From a table near by the materials were brought, and the Emir, again upon his knees, wrote as his master dictated.

The paper need not be given in full. Enough that it covered with uncommon literalness—for the Conqueror's memory was prodigious—the suggestions of the Prince of India already quoted respecting the duties of the agent in Constantinople. While writing, the Emir was variously moved; one instant, his countenance was deeply flushed, and in the next very pale; sometimes his hand trembled. Mahommed meantime kept close watch upon him, and now he asked:

"What ails thee?"

"My Lord's will is my will," was the answer—"yet"—

"Out—speak out."

"My Lord is sending me from him, and I dread losing my place at his right hand."

Mahommed laughed heartily.

"Lay the fear betime," he then said, gravely. "Where thou goest, though out of reach of my right hand, there will my thought be. Hear—nay, at my knee."

He laid the hand spoken of on Mirza's shoulder, and stooped towards him. "Ah, my Saladin, thou wert never in love, I take it? Well—I am. Look not up now, lest—lest thou think my bearded cheek hath changed to a girl's."

Mirza did not look up, yet he knew his master was blushing.

"Where thou goest, I would give everything but the sword of Othman to be every hour of the day, for she abideth there… I see a ring on thy hand—the ruby ring I gave thee the day thou didst unhorse the uncircumcised deputy of Hunyades. Give it back to me. 'Tis well. See, I place it on the third finger of my left hand. They say whoever looketh at her is thenceforth her lover. I caution thee, and so long as this ruby keepeth color

unchanged, I shall know thou art keeping honor bright with me—that thou lovest her, because thou canst not help it, yet for my sake, and because I love her… Look up now, my falcon—look up, and pledge me."

"I pledge my Lord," Mirza answered.

"Now I will tell thee. She is that kinswoman of the *Gabour* Emperor Constantine whom we saw here the day of our arrival. Or didst thou see her? I have forgotten."

"I did not, my Lord."

"Well, thou wilt know her at sight; for in grace and beauty I think she must be a daughter of the houri this moment giving immortal drink to the beloved of Allah, even the Prophet."

Mahommed changed his tone.

"The paper and the pen."

And taking them he signed the instructions, and the signature was the same as that on the safeguard on the gate at Therapia.

"There—keep it well; for when thou gettest to Constantinople, thou wilt become a Christian." He laughed again. "Mirza—the Mirza Mahommed swore by, and appointed keeper of his heart's secret—he a Christian! This will shift the sin of the apostasy to me."

Mirza took the paper.

"I have not chosen to write of the other matter. In what should it be written, if at all, except in my blood—so close is it to me?… These are the things I expect of thee. Art thou listening? She shall be to thee as thine eye. Advise me of her health, and where she goes; with whom she consorts; what she does and says; save her from harm: does one speak ill of her, kill him, only do it in my name—and forget not, O my Saladin!—as thou hopest a garden and a couch in Paradise—forget not that in Constantinople, when I come, I am to receive her from thy hand peerless in all things as I left her to–day… Thou hast my will all told. I will send money to thy room to–night, and thou wilt leave to–night, lest, being seen making ready in the morning, some idiot pursue thee with his wonder…

As thou art to be my other self, be it royally. Kings never account to themselves… Thou wantest now nothing but this signet."

From his breast he drew a large ring, its emerald setting graven with the signature at the bottom of the instructions, and gave it to him.

"Is there a Pacha or a Begler–bey, Governor of a city or a province, property of my father, who refuseth thy demand after showing him this, report him, and *Shintan* will be more tolerable unto him than I, when I have my own. It is all said. Go now… We will speak of rewards when next we meet… Or stay! Thou art to communicate by way of this Castle, and for that I will despatch a man to thee in Constantinople. Remember—for every word thou sendest me of the city, I look for two of her… Here is my hand." Mirza kissed it, and departed.

CHAPTER IV

THE EMIR IN ITALY

We know now who Count Corti is, and the objects of his coming to Constantinople—that he is a secret agent of Mahommed—that, summed up in the fewest words, his business is to keep the city in observation, and furnish reports which will be useful to his master in the preparation the latter is making for its conquest. We also know he is charged with very peculiar duties respecting the Princess Irene.

The most casual consideration of these revelations will make it apparent, in the next place, that hereafter the Emir must be designated by his Italian appellative in full or abbreviated. Before forsaking the old name, there is lively need of information, whether as he now stands on the deck of his galley, waiting the permissions prayed by him of the Emperor Constantine, he is, aside from title, the same Mirza lately so honored by Mahommed.

From the time the ship hove in sight of the city, he had kept his place on the cabin. The sailors, looking up to him occasionally, supposed him bound by the view, so motionless he stood, so steadfastly he gazed. Yet in fact his countenance was not expressive of admiration or rapture. A man with sound vision may have a mountain just before him and not see it; he may be in the vortex of a battle deaf to its voices; a thought or a feeling can occupy him in the crisis of his life to the exclusion of every sense. If perchance it be so with the Emir now, he must have undergone a change which only a powerful cause could have brought about. He had been so content with his condition, so proud of his fame already won, so happy in keeping prepared for the opportunities plainly in his sight, so satisfied with his place in his master's confidence, so delighted when that master laid a hand upon his shoulder and called him familiarly, now his Saladin, and now his falcon.

Faithfully, as bidden, Mirza sallied from the White Castle the night of his appointment to the agency in Constantinople. He spoke to no one of his intention, for he well knew secrecy was the soul of the enterprise. For the same reason, he bought of a dervish travelling with the Lord Mahommed's suite a complete outfit, including the man's donkey and donkey furniture. At break of day he was beyond the hills of the Bosphorus, resolved to skirt the eastern shore of the Marmora and Hellespont, from which the Greek population had been almost entirely driven by the Turks, and at the Dardanelles take ship for Italy direct as possible—a long route and trying—yet there was in it the total disappearance from the eyes of acquaintances needful to success in his venture. His disguise insured him from interruption on the road, dervishes being sacred characters in the estimation of the Faithful, and generally too poor to excite cupidity. A gray–frocked man, hooded, coarsely sandalled, and with a blackened gourd at his girdle for the alms he might receive from the devout, no Islamite meeting him would ever suspect a large treasure in the ragged bundle on the back of the patient animal plodding behind him like a tired dog.

The Dardanelles was a great stopping–place for merchants and tradesmen, Greek, Venetian, Genoese. There Mirza provided himself with an Italian suit, adopted the Italian tongue, and became Italian. He borrowed a chart of the coast of Italy from a sailor, to determine the port at which it would be advisable for him to land.

While settling this point, the conversation had with the Prince of India in the latter's tent at Zaribah arose to mind, and he recalled with particularity all that singular person said with reference to the accent observable in his speech. He also went over the description he himself had given the Prince of the house or castle from which he had been taken in childhood. A woman had borne him outdoors, under a blue sky, along a margin of white sand, an orchard on one hand, the sea on the other. He remembered the report of the waves breaking on the shore, the olive–green color of the trees in the orchard, and the battlemented gate of the castle; whereupon the Prince said the description reminded him of the eastern shore of Italy in the region of Brindisi.

It was a vague remark certainly; but now it made a deeper impression on the Emir than at the moment of its utterance and pointed his attention to Brindisi. The going to Italy, he argued, was really to get a warrant for the character he was to assume in Constantinople; that is, to obtain some knowledge of the country, its geography, political divisions, cities, rulers, and present conditions generally, without which the slightest cross–examination by any of the well–informed personages about the Emperor would shatter his pretensions in an instant. Then it was he fell into a most unusual mood.

Since the hour the turbaned rovers captured him he had not been assailed by a desire to see or seek his country and family. Who was his father? Was his mother living? Probably nothing could better define the profundity of the system underlying the organization of the Janissaries than that he had never asked those questions with a genuine care to have them solved. What a suppression of the most ordinary instincts of nature! How could it have been accomplished so completely? As a circumstance, its tendency is to confirm the theory that men are creatures of education and association… Was his mother living? Did she remember him? Had she wept for him? What sort of being was she? If living, how old would she be? And he actually attempted a calculation. Calling himself twenty–six she might not be over forty–five. That was not enough to dim her eyes or more than slightly silver her hair; and as respects her heart, are not the affections of a mother flowers for culling by Death alone?

Such reflections never fail effect. A tenderness of spirit is the first token of their presence; then memory and imagination begin striving; the latter to bring the beloved object back, and the former to surround it with sweetest circumstances. They wrought with Mirza as with everybody else. The yearning they excited in him was a surprise; presently he determined to act on the Prince of India's suggestion, and betake himself to the eastern coast of Italy.

The story of the sack of a castle was of a kind to have wide circulation; at the same time this one was recent enough to be still in the memory of persons living. Finding the place of its occurrence was the difficulty. If in

the vicinity of Brindisi—well, he would go and ask. The yearning spoken of did not come alone; it had for companion, Conscience, as yet in the background.

There were vessels bound for Venice. One was taking in water, after which it would sail for Otranto. It seemed a fleet craft, with a fair crew, and a complement of stout rowers. Otranto was south of Brindisi a little way, and the castle he wanted to hear of might have been situated between those cities. Who could tell? Besides, as an Italian nobleman, to answer inquiry in Constantinople, he would have to locate himself somewhere, and possibly the coast in question might accommodate him with both a location and a title. The result was he took passage to Otranto.

While there he kept his role of traveller, but was studious, and picked up a great fund of information bearing upon the part awaiting him. He lived and dressed well, and affected religious circles. It was the day when Italy was given over to the nobles—the day of robbers, fighting, intrigues and usurpations—of free lances and bold banditti—of government by the strong hand, of right determinable by might, of ensanguined Guelphs and Ghibellines. Of these the Emir kept clear.

By chance he fell in with an old man of secondary rank in the city much given to learning, an habitue of a library belonging to one of the monasteries. It came out ere long that the venerable person was familiar with the coast from Otranto to Brindisi, and beyond far as Polignano.

"It was in my sturdier days," the veteran said, with a dismal glance at his shrunken hands. "The people along the shore were much harried by Moslem pirates. Landing from their galleys, the depredators burned habitations, slew the men, and carried off such women as they thought would fetch a price. They even assaulted castles. At last we were driven to the employment of a defensive guard cooperative on land and water. I was a captain. Our fights with the rovers were frequent and fierce. Neither side showed quarter."

The reminiscence stimulated Mirza to inquiry. He asked the old man if he could mention a castle thus attacked.

"Yes, there was one belonging to Count Corti, a few leagues beyond Brindisi. The Count defended himself, but was slain."

"Had he a family?"

"A wife and a boy child."

"What became of them?"

"By good chance the Countess was in Brindisi attending a fete; she escaped, of course. The boy, two or three years of age, was made prisoner, and never heard of afterwards."

A premonition seized Mirza.

"Is the Countess living?"

"Yes. She never entirely recovered from the shock, but built a house near the site of the castle, and clearing a room in the ruins, turned it into a chapel. Every morning and evening she goes there, and prays for the soul of her husband, and the return of her lost boy."

"How long is it since the poor lady was so bereft?"

The narrator reflected, and replied: "Twenty–two or three years."

"May the castle be found?"

"Yes."

"Have you been to it?"

"Many times."

"How was it named?"

"After the Count—*Il Castillo di Corti*."

"Tell me something of its site."

"It is down close by the sea. A stone wall separates its front enclosure from the beach. Sometimes the foam of the waves is dashed upon the wall. Through a covered gate one looks out, and all is water. Standing on the tower, all landward is orchard and orchard—olive and almond trees intermixed. A great estate it was and is. The Countess, it is understood, has a will executed; if the boy does not return before her death, the Church is to be her legatee."

There was more of the conversation, covering a history of the Corti family, honorable as it was old—the men famous warriors, the women famous beauties.

Mirza dreamed through the night of the Countess, and awoke with a vague consciousness that the wife of the Pacha, the grace of whose care had been about him in childhood—a good woman, gentle and tender—was after all but a representative of the mother who had given him birth, just as on her part every mother is mercifully representative of God. Under strong feeling he took boat for Brindisi.

There he had no trouble in confirming the statements of his Otranto acquaintance. The Countess was still living, and the coast road northwardly would bring him to the ruins of her castle. The journey did not exceed five leagues.

What he might find at the castle, how long he would stay, what do, were so uncertain—indeed everything in the connection was so dependent upon conditions impossible of foresight, that he resolved to set out on foot. To this course he was the more inclined by the mildness of the weather, and the reputation of the region for freshness and beauty.

About noon he was fairly on the road. Persons whom he met—and they were not all of the peasant class—seeing a traveller jaunty in plumed cap, light blue camail, pointed buskins, and close–fitting hose the color of the camail, sword at his side, and javelin in hand, stayed to observe him long as he was in sight, never dreaming they were permitted to behold a favorite of one of the bloody Mahounds of the East.

Over hill and down shallow vales: through stone–fenced lanes; now in the shade of old trees; now along a seashore partially overflowed by languid waves, he went, lighter in step than heart, for he was in the mood by no means uncommon, when the spirit is prophesying evil unto itself. He was sensible of the feeling, and for shame would catch the javelin in the middle and whirl it about him defensively until it sung like a spinning–wheel; at times he stopped and, with his fingers in his mouth, whistled to a small bird as if it were a hunting hawk high in air.

Once, seeing a herd of goats around a house thatched and half–hidden in vines, he asked for milk. A woman brought it to him, with a slice of brown bread; and while he ate and drank, she stared at him in respectful admiration; and when he paid her in gold, she said, courtesying low: "A glad life to my Lord! I will pray the Madonna to make the wish good." Poor creature! She had no idea she was blessing one in whose faith the Prophet was nearer God than God's own Son.

At length the road made an abrupt turn to the right, bringing him to a long stretch of sandy beach. Nearly as he could judge, it was time for the castle to appear, and he was anxious to make it before sundown. Yet in the angle of the wood he saw a wayside box of stone sheltering an image of the Virgin, with the Holy Child in its arms. Besides being sculptured better than usual, the figures were covered with flowers in wreath and bouquet. A dressed slab in front of the structure, evidently for the accommodation of worshippers, invited him to rest, and he took the seat, and looking up at the mother, she appeared to be looking at him. He continued his gaze, and presently the face lost its stony appearance—stranger still, it smiled. It was illusion, of course, but he arose startled, and moved on with quickened step. The impression went with him. Why the smile? He did not believe in images: much less did he believe in the Virgin, except as she was the subject of a goodly story. And absorbed in the thought, he plodded on, leaving the sun to go down unnoticed.

Thereupon the shadows thickened in the woods at his left hand, while the sound of the incoming waves at his right increased as silence laid its velvet finger with a stronger compress on all other pulsations. Here and there a star peeped timidly through the purpling sky—now it was dusk—a little later, it would be night—and yet no castle!

He pushed on more vigorously; not that he was afraid—fear and the falcon of Mahommed had never made acquaintance—but he began to think of a bed in the woods, and worse yet, he wanted the fast–going daylight to help him decide if the castle when he came to it were indeed the castle of his fathers. He had believed all along, if he could see the pile once, his memory would revive and help him to recognition.

At last night fell, and there was darkness trebled on the land, and on the sea darkness, except where ghostly lines of light stretched themselves along the restless water. Should he go on?…

Then he heard a bell—one soft tone near by and silvery clear. He halted. Was it of the earth? A hush deeper of the sound—and he was wondering if another illusion were not upon him, when again the bell!

"Oh!" he muttered, "a trick of the monks in Otranto! Some soul is passing."

He pressed forward, guided by the tolling. Suddenly the trees fell away, and the road brought him to a stone wall heavily coped. On further, a blackened mass arose in dim relief against the sky, with heavy merlons on its top.

"It is the embattled gate!" he exclaimed, to himself—"the embattled gate!—and here the beach!—and, O Allah! the waves there are making the reports they used to!"

The bell now tolled with awful distinctness, filling him with unwonted chills—tolled, as if to discourage his memory in its struggle to lift itself out of a lapse apparently intended to be final as the grave— tolled solemnly, as if his were the soul being rung into the next life. A rush of forebodings threatened him with paralysis of will, and it was only by a strong exertion he overcame it, and brought himself back to the situation, and the question, What next?

Now Mirza was not a man to forego a purpose lightly. Emotional, but not superstitious, he tried the sword, if it were loose in the scabbard, and then, advancing the point of his javelin, entered the darkened gallery of the gate. Just as he emerged from it on the inner side, the bell tolled.

"A Moslem doth not well," he thought, silently repeating a saying of the *jadis*, "to accept a Christian call to prayer; but," he answered in self–excuse, "I am not going to prayer—I am seeking"—he stopped, for very oddly, the face of the Virgin in the stone box back in the angle of the road presented itself to him, and still more oddly, he felt firmer of purpose seeing again the smile on the face. Then he finished the sentence aloud —"my mother *who is a Christian*."

There was a jar in the conclusion, and he went back to find it, and having found it, he was surprised. Up to that moment, he had not thought of his mother a Christian. How came the words in his mouth now? Who prompted them? And while he was hastily pondering the effect upon her of the discovery that he himself was an Islamite, the image in the box reoccurred to him, this time with the child in its arms; and thereupon the mystery seemed to clear itself at once. "Mother and mother!" he said. "What if my coming were the answer of one of them to the other's prayer?"

The idea affected him; his spirit softened; the heat of tears sprang to his eyelids; and the effort he made to rise above the unmanliness engaged him so he failed to see the other severer and more lasting struggle inevitable if the Countess were indeed the being to whom he owed the highest earthly obligations—the struggle between natural affection and honor, as the latter lay coiled up in the ties binding him to Mahommed.

The condition, be it remarked, is ours; for from that last appearance of the image by the wayside—from that instant, marking a new era in his life—often as the night and its incidents recurred to him, he had never a doubt of his relationship to the Countess. Indeed, not only was she thenceforward his mother, but all the ground within the gate was his by natal right, and the castle was the very castle from which he had been carried away, over the body of his heroic father—*he was the Count Corti*!

These observations will bring the reader to see more distinctly the Emir's state after passing the gate. Of the surroundings, he beheld nothing but shadows more or less dense and voluminous; the mournful murmuring of the wind told him they belonged to trees and shrubbery in clumps. The road he was on, although blurred, was serviceable as a guide, and he pursued it until brought to a building so masked by night the details were invisible. Following its upper line, relieved against the gray sky, he made out a broken front and one tower massively battlemented. A pavement split the road in two; crossing it, he came to an opening, choked with timbers and bars of iron; surmisably the front portal at present in disuse.

He needed no explanation of its condition. Fire and battle were familiars of his.

The bell tolled on. The sound, so passing sweet elsewhere, seemed to issue from the yawning portal, leaving him to fancy the interior a lumber of floors, galleries, and roofs in charred tumble down.

Mirza turned away presently, and took the left branch of the road; since he could not get into the castle, he would go around it; and in doing so, he borrowed from the distance traversed a conception of its immensity, as well as of the importance the countship must have enjoyed in its palmy days.

At length he gained the rear of the great pile. The wood there was more open, and he was pleased with the sight of lights apparently gleaming through windows, from which he inferred a hamlet pitched on a broken site. Then he heard singing; and listening, never had human voices seemed to him so impressively solemn. Were they coming or going?

Ere long a number of candles, very tall, and screened from the wind by small lanterns of transparent paper, appeared on the summit of an ascent; next moment the bearers of the candles were in view—boys bareheaded and white frocked. As they began to descend the height, a bevy of friars succeeded them, their round faces and tonsured crowns glistening in ruddy contrast with their black habits. A choir of four singers, three men and one woman, followed the monks. Then a linkman in half armor strode across the summit, lighting the way for a figure, also in black, which at once claimed Mirza's gaze.

As he stared at the figure, the account given him by the old captain in Otranto flashed upon his memory. The widow of the murdered count had cleared a room in the castle, and fitted it up as a chapel, and every morning and evening she went thither to pray for the soul of her husband and the return of her lost boy.

The words were alive with suggestions; but suggestions imply uncertainty; wherefore they are not a reason for the absolute conviction with which the Emir now said to himself:

"It is she—the Countess—my mother!"

There must be in every heart a store of prevision of which we are not aware—occasions bring it out with such sudden and bewildering effect.

Everything—hymn, tolling bell, lights, boys, friars, procession—was accessory to that veiled, slow–marching figure. And in habiliment, movement, air, with what telling force it impersonated sorrow! On the other hand, how deep and consuming the sorrow itself must be!

She—he beheld only her—descended the height without looking up or around—a little stooped, yet tall and of dignified carriage—not old nor yet young—a noble woman worthy reverence.

While he was making these comments, the procession reached the foot of the ascent; then the boys and friars came between, and hid her from his view.

"O Allah! and thou his Prophet!" he exclaimed. "Am I not to see her face? Is she not to know me?"

Curiously the question had not presented itself before; neither when he resolved to come, nor while on the way. To say truth, he had been all the while intent on the one partial object—to see her. He had not anticipated the awakening the sight might have upon his feelings.

"Am I not to discover myself to her? Is she never to know me?" he repeated.

The lights in the hands of the boys were beginning to gleam along a beaten road a short distance in front of the agitated Emir conducting to the castle. He divined at once that the Countess was coming to the chapel for the usual evening service, and that, by advancing to the side of the road, he could get a near view of her as she passed. He started forward impulsively, but after a few steps stopped, trembling like a child imagining a ghost.

Now our conception of the man forbids us thinking him overcome by a trifle, whether of the air or in the flesh. A change so extreme must have been the work of a revelation of quick and powerful consequence—and it was, although the first mention may excite a smile. In the gleam of mental lightning—we venture on the term for want of another more descriptive—he had been reminded of the business which brought him to Italy.

Let us pause here, and see what the reminder means; if only because the debonair Mirza, with whom we have been well pleased, is now to become another person in name and character, commanding our sympathies as before, but for a very different reason.

This was what the lightning gave him to see, and not darkly: If he discovered himself to the Countess, he must expose his history from the night the rovers carried him away. True, the tale might be given generally, leaving its romance to thrill the motherly heart, and exalt him the more; for to whom are heroes always the greatest heroes? Unhappily steps in confession are like links in a chain, one leads to another… Could he, a Christian born, tell her he was an apostate? Or if he told her, would it not be one more grief to the many she was already breaking under—one, the most unendurable? And as to himself, how could he more certainly provoke a forfeiture of her love?… She would ask—if but to thank God for mercies—to what joyful accident his return was owing? And then? Alas! with her kiss on his brow, could he stand silent? More grievous yet, could he deceive her? If nothing is so murderous of self–respect as falsehood, a new life begun with a lie needs no prophet to predict its end. No, he must answer the truth. This conviction was the ghost which set him trembling. An admission that he was a Moslem would wound her, yet the hope of his conversion would remain—nay, the labor in making the hope good might even renew her interest in life; but to tell her he was in Italy to assist in the overthrow of a Christian Emperor for the exaltation of an infidel—God help him! Was ever such a monster as he would then become in her eyes?… The consequences of that disclosure, moreover, were not to the Countess and himself merely. With a sweep of wing one's fancy is alone capable of, he was borne back to the White Castle, and beheld Mahommed. When before did a Prince, contemplating an achievement which was to ring the world, give trust with such absoluteness of faith? Poor Mirza! The sea rolled indefinitely wide between the White Castle and this one of his fathers; across it, nevertheless, he again heard the words: "As thou art to be my other self, be it royally. Kings never account to themselves." If they made betrayal horrible in thought, what would the fact be?…

Finally, last but not least of the reflections the lightning laid bare, the Emir had been bred a soldier, and he loved war for itself and for the glory it offered unlike every other glory. Was he to bid them both a long farewell?

Poor Mirza! A few paragraphs back allusion was made to a struggle before him between natural affection on one hand and honor on the other. Perhaps it was obscurely stated; if so, here it is amended, and stripped of conditions. He has found his mother. She is coming down the road—there, behind the dancing lights, behind the friars, she is coming to pray for him. Should he fly her recognition or betray his confiding master? Room there may be to say the alternatives were a judgment upon him, but who will deny him pity?… There is often a suffering, sometimes an agony, in indecision more wearing than disease, deadlier than sword–cuts.

The mournful pageant was now where its lights brought out parts of the face of the smoke–stained building. With a loud clang a door was thrown open, and a friar, in the black vestments usual in masses for the dead, came out to receive the Countess. The interior behind him was dully illuminated. A few minutes more, and the opportunity to see her face would be lost. Still the Emir stood irresolute. Judge the fierceness of the conflict in his breast!

At last he moved forward. The acolytes, with their great candles of yellow wax, were going by as he gained the edge of the road. They looked at him wonderingly. The friars, in Dominican cassocks, stared at him also. Then the choir took its turn. The linkman at sight of him stopped an instant, then marched on. The Emir really beheld none of them; his eyes and thoughts were in waiting; and now—how his heart beat!—how wistfully he gazed!—the Countess was before him, not three yards away.

Her garments, as said, were all black. A thick veil enveloped her head; upon her breast her crossed hands shone ivory white. Two or three times the right hand, in signing the cross, uncovered a ring upon the left—the wedding ring probably. Her bearing was of a person not so old as persecuted by an engrossing anguish. She did not once raise her face.

The Emir's heart was full of prayer.

"O Allah! It is my mother! If I may not speak to her, or kiss her feet— if I may not call her mother—if I may not say, mother, mother, behold, I am thy son come back—still, as thou art the Most Merciful! let me see her face, and suffer her to see mine—once, O Allah! once, if nevermore!"

But the face remained covered—and so she passed, but in passing she prayed. Though the voice was low, lie heard these words: "Oh, sweet Mother! By the Blessed Son of thy love and passion, remember mine, I beseech thee. Be with him, and bring him to me quickly. Miserable woman that I am!"

The world, and she with it, swam in the tears he no longer tried to stay. Stretching his arms toward her, he fell upon his knees, then upon his face; and that the face was in the dust, he never minded. When he looked up, she was gone on, the last of the procession. And he knew she had not seen him.

He followed after. Everybody stood aside to let her enter the door first. The friar received her; she went in, and directly the linkman stood alone outside.

"Stay!" said the linkman, peremptorily. "Who art thou?"

Thus rudely challenged, the Emir awoke from his daze—awoke with all his faculties clear.

"A gentleman of Otranto," he replied.

"What is thy pleasure?"

"Admit me to the chapel."

"Thou art a stranger, and the service is private. Or hast thou been invited?"

"No."

"Thou canst not enter."

Again the world dropped into darkness before Mirza; but this time it was from anger. The linkman never suspected his peril. Fortunately for him, the voice of the female chorister issued from the doorway in tremulous melody. Mirza listened, and became tranquillized. The voice sank next into a sweet unearthly pleading, and completely subdued, he began arguing with himself… She had not seen him while he was in the dust at her side,

and now this repulse at the door—how were they to be taken except as expressions of the will of Heaven?… There was plenty of time—better go away, and return—perhaps to–morrow. He was not prepared to prove his identity, if it were questioned… There would be a scene, and he shrank from it… Yes, better retire now… And he turned to go. Not six steps away, the Countess reappeared to his excited mind, exactly as she had passed praying for him—reappeared—

… "like the painting of a sorrow."

A revulsion of feeling seized him—he halted. Oh, the years she had mourned for him! Her love was deep as the sea! Tears again—and without thought of what he did—all aimlessly—he returned to the door.

"This castle was sacked and burned by pirates, was it not?" he asked the linkman.

"Yes."

"They slew the Count Corti?"

"Yes."

"And carried off his son?"

"Yes."

"Had he other children?"

"No."

"What was the name of the boy?"

"Ugo."

"Well—in thy ear now—thou didst not well in shutting me out—*I am that Ugo.*"

Thereupon the Emir walked resolutely away.

A cry, shrill and broken, overtook him, issuing apparently from the door of the chapel—a second time he heard it, more a moan than a shriek—and thinking the linkman had given the alarm, he quickened his pace to a run, and was soon out on the beach.

The breath of the sea was pleasant and assuring, and falling into a walk, he turned his face toward Brindisi. But the cry pursued him. He imagined the scene in the chapel—the distress of the Countess—the breaking up of the service—the hurry of question—a consultation, and possibly search for him. Every person in the procession but the Countess had seen him; so the only open point in the affair was the one of directest interest to her: Was it her son?

Undoubtedly the suffering lady would not rest until investigation was exhausted. Failing to find the stranger about the castle, horsemen might be sent out on the road. There is terrible energy in mother–love. These reflections stimulated the Emir to haste. Sometimes he even ran; only at the shrine of the Virgin and Child in the angle of the road did he halt. There he cast himself upon the friendly slab to recover breath.

All this of course indicated a preference for Mahommed. And now he came to a decision. He would proceed with the duty assigned him by the young master; then, at the end, he would come back, and assert himself in his native land.

He sat on the slab an hour or more. At intervals the outcry, which he doubted not was his mother's, rang in his ears, and every time he heard it, conscience attacked him with its whip of countless stings. Why subject her to more misery? For what other outcome could there be to the ceaseless contention of fears and hopes now hers? Oh, if she had only seen him when he was so near her in the road! That she did not, was the will of Allah, and the fatalistic Mohammedan teaching brought him a measure of comfort. In further sooth, he had found a location and a title. Thenceforward, and not fictitiously, he was the *Count Corti*; and so entitling himself, he determined to make Brindisi, and take ship for Genoa or Venice in the morning before a messenger could arrive from the castle.

As he arose from the slab, a bird in housel for the night flew out of the box. Its small cheep reminded him of the smile he had fancied on the face of the Madonna, and how, a little later, the smile had, with such timely suggestion of approval, woven itself into his thought of the Countess. He looked up at the face again; but the night was over it like a veil, and he

went nearer, and laid his hand softly on the Child. That which followed was not a miracle; only a consequence of the wisdom which permits the enshrinement of a saintly woman and Holy Child as witnesses of the Divine Goodness to humanity. He raised himself higher in the box, and pushing aside a heap of faded floral offerings, kissed the foot of the taller image, saying: "Thus would I have done to my mother." And when he had climbed down, and was in the road, it seemed some one answered him: "Go thy way! God and Allah are the same." We may now urge the narrative. From Brindisi the Emir sailed to Venice. Two weeks in "the glorious city in the sea" informed him of it thoroughly. While there, he found, on the "ways" of an Adriatic builder, the galley in which we have seen him at anchor in the Golden Horn. Leaving an order for the employment of a sailing–master and crew when the vessel was complete, he departed next for Rome. At Padua he procured the harness of a man–at–arms of the period, and recruited a company of *condottieri*— mercenary soldiers of every nationality. With all his sacerdotal authority, Nicholas V., the Holy Father, was sorely tried in keeping his States. The freebooters who unctuously kissed his hand to–day, did not scruple, if opportunity favored, to plunder one of his towns tomorrow. It befell that Count Corti—so the Emir styled himself—found a Papal castle beleaguered by marauders, whom he dispersed, slaying their chief with his own hand. Nicholas, in public audience, asked him to name the reward he preferred.

"Knighthood at thy hands, first of all things," was the reply.

The Holy Father took a sword from one of his officers, and gave him the *accolade*.

"What next, my son?"

"I am tired fighting men who ought to be Christians. Give me, I pray, thy commission to make war upon the Barbary pirates who infest the seas."

This was granted him.

"What next?"

"Nothing, Holy Father, but thy blessing, and a certificate in good form, and under seal, of these favors thou hast done me."

The certificate and the blessing were also granted.

The Count then dismissed his lances, and, hastening to Naples, embarked for Venice. There he supplied himself with suits of the finest Milanese armor he could obtain, and a wardrobe consisting of costumes such as were in vogue with the gay gallants along the Grand Canal. Crossing to Tripoli, he boarded a Moorish merchantman, and made prisoners of the crew and rowers. The prize he gave to his Christian sailors, and sent them home. Summoning his prisoners on deck, he addressed them in Arabic, offering them high pay if they would serve him, and they gratefully accepted his terms.

The Count then directed his prow to what is now Aleppo, with the purpose of procuring Arab horses; and having purchased five of the purest blood, he made sail for Constantinople.

We shall now, for a time, permit the title *Emir* to lapse. The knight we have seen on the deck of the new arrival in the Golden Horn viewing with melancholy interest the cities on either side of the fairest harbor on earth, is in easy English speech, *Count Corti*, the Italian.

Thus far the Count had been successful in his extraordinary mission, yet he was not happy. He had made three discoveries during his journey—his mother, his country, his religion. Ordinarily these relations—if we may so call them—furnish men their greatest sum of contentment; sadly for him, however, he had made a fourth finding, of itself sufficient to dash all the others—in briefest term, he was not in condition to acknowledge either of them. Unable to still the cry heard while retiring from his father's ruined castle, he surrendered himself more and more to the wisdom brought away from the box of the Madonna and Child in the angle of the road to Brindisi —*God and Allah are the same*. Conscience and a growing sense of misappropriated life were making Count Corti a very different person from the light–hearted Emir of Mahommed.

CHAPTER V

THE PRINCESS IRENE IN TOWN

An oblong room divided in the middle crosswise by two fluted pillars of pink–stained marble, light, delicately capped, and very graceful—between the pillars a segmental arch—between the walls and the pillars square ties;—the wall above the pillars elaborately scrolled;—three curtains of woollen stuff uniformly Tyrian dyed filling the open places—the central curtain drawn to the pillars, and held there by silken ropes richly tasselled—the side curtains dropped;—a skylight for each division of the room, and under each skylight an ample brazier dispensing a comfortable degree of warmth;—floor laid in pink and saffron tiles;— chairs with and without arms, some upholstered, all quaintly carved—to each chair a rug harmoniously colored;—massive tables of carven wood, the tops of burnished copper inlaid with blocks of jasper, mostly red and yellow—on the tables murrhine pitchers vase–shaped, with crystal drinking goblets about them;—the skylights conical and of clear glass;— the walls panelled, a picture in every panel, and the raised margins and the whole space outside done in arabesque of studied involution;—doors opposite each other and bare;—such was the reception–room in the town–house of the Princess Irene arranged for the winter.

On an armless chair in one of the divisions of the beautiful room, the Princess sat, slightly bending over a piece of embroidery stretched upon a frame. What with the accessories about her—the chair, a small table at her right covered with the bright materials in use, the slanted frame, and a flexible lion's skin under her feet—she was a picture once seen never forgotten. The wonderful setting of the head and neck upon the Phidian shoulders was admirably complemented by the long arms, bare, round, and of the whiteness of an almond kernel freshly broken, the hands, blue–

veined and dimpled, and the fingers, tapering, pliant, nimble, rapid, each seemingly possessed of a separate intelligence.

To the left of the Princess, a little removed, Lael half reclined against a heap of cushions, pale, languid, and not wholly recovered from the effects of the abduction by Demedes, the terrible doom which had overtaken her father, and the disappearance of the Prince of India, the latter unaccountable except upon the hypothesis of death in the great fire. The dying prayer of the son of Jahdai had not failed with the Princess Irene. Receiving the unfortunate girl from Sergius the day after the rescue from the cistern, she accepted the guardianship, and from that hour watched and tended her with maternal solicitude.

The other division of the room was occupied by attendants. They were visible through the opening left by the drawn curtain; yet it is not to be supposed they were under surveillance; on the contrary, their presence in the house was purely voluntary. They read, sang, accepted tasks in embroidery from their mistress, accompanied her abroad, loved her—in a word, their service was in every respect compatible with high rank, and in return they derived a certain education from her. For by universal acknowledgment she was queen and arbiter in the social world of Byzantium; in manner the mirror, in taste and fashion its very form. Indeed, she was the subject of but one objection—her persistent protest against the encumbrance of a veil.

With all her grave meditation, she never lectured her attendants, knowing probably that sermons in example are more impressive than sermons in words. In illustration of the freedom they enjoyed in her presence and hearing, one of them, behind the curtain, touched a stringed instrument—a cithern—and followed the prelude with a song of Anacreontic vein.

THE GOLDEN NOON.

If my life were but a day—
  One morn, one night,
With a golden noon for play,

And I, of right,
Could say what I would do
With it—what would I do?

Penance to me—e'en the stake,
And late or soon!—
Yet would Love remain to make
That golden noon
Delightful—I would do—
Ah, Love, what would I do?

And when the singer ceased there was a merry round of applause.

The ripple thus awakened had scarcely subsided, when the ancient Lysander opened one of the doors, and, after ringing the tiled floor with the butt of his javelin, and bowing statelywise, announced Sergius. Taking a nod from the Princess, he withdrew to give the visitor place.

Sergius went first to Irene, and silently kissed her hand; then, leaving her to resume work, he drew a chair to Lael's side.

Under his respectful manner there was an ease which only an assurance of welcome could have brought him. This is not to be taken in the sense of familiarity; if he ever indulged that vulgarism—something quite out of character with him—it was not in his intercourse with the Princess. She did not require formality; she simply received courtesy from everybody, even the Emperor, as a natural tribute. At the same time, Sergius was nearer in her regard than any other person, for special reasons.

We have seen the sympathetic understanding between the two in the matter of religion. We have seen, also, why she viewed him as a protege. Never had one presented himself to her so gentle and unconventional never one knowing so little of the world. With life all before him, with its ways to learn, she saw he required an adviser through a period of tutelage, and assumed the relation partly through a sense of duty, partly from reverent recollection of Father Hilarion. These were arguments sound in themselves; but two others had recently offered.

In the first place she was aware of the love which had arisen between the monk and Lael. She had not striven to spy it out. Like children, they had affected no disguise of their feeling; and while disallowing the passion a place in her own breast, she did not deprecate or seek to smother it in others. Far from that, in these, her wards, so to speak, it was with her an affair of permissive interest. They were so lovable, it seemed an order of nature they should love each other.

Next, the world was dealing harshly with Sergius; and though he strove manfully to hide the fact, she saw he was suffering. He deserved well, she thought, for his rescue of Lael, and for the opportunity given the Emperor to break up the impiety founded by Demedes. Unhappily her opinion was not subscribed in certain quarters. The powerful Brotherhood of the St. James' amongst others was in an extreme state of exasperation with him. They insisted he could have achieved the rescue without the death of the Greek. They went so far as to accuse him of a double murder—of the son first, then of the father. A terrible indictment! And they were bold and open–mouthed. Out of respect for the Emperor, who was equally outspoken in commendation of Sergius, they had not proceeded to the point of expulsion. The young man was still of the Brotherhood; nevertheless he did not venture to exercise any of the privileges of a member. His cell was vacant. The five services of the day were held in the chapel without him. In short, the Brotherhood were in wait for an opportunity to visit him with their vengeance. In hope of a favorable turn in the situation, he wore the habit of the Order, but it was his only outward sign of fraternity. Without employment, miserable, he found lodgment in the residence of the Patriarch, and what time he was not studying, he haunted the old churches of the city, Sancta Sophia in especial, and spent many hours a dreaming voyager on the Bosphorus.

The glad look which shone in the eyes of the invalid when Sergius took seat by her was very noticeable; and when she reached him her hand, the kiss he left upon it was of itself a declaration of tender feeling.

"I hope my little friend is better, to–day," he said, gravely.

"Yes, much better. The Princess says I may go out soon—the first real spring day."

"That is good news. I wish I could hurry the spring. I have everything ready to take you on the water—a perfect boat, and two master rowers. Yesterday they carried me to the Black Sea and back, stopping for a lunch of bread and figs at the foot of the Giants' Mountain. They boast they can repeat the trip often as there are days in the week."

"Did you stop at the White Castle?" she asked, with a smile.

"No. Our noble Princess was not with me; and in her absence, I feared the Governor might forget to be polite as formerly."

The gracious lady, listening, bent lower over the frame before her. She knew so much more of the Governor than Lael did! But Lael then inquired:

"Where have you been to–day?"

"Well, my little friend, let me see if I can interest you… This morning I awoke betimes, and set myself to study. Oh, those chapters of John—the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth. There is no need of religious knowledge beyond them. Of the many things they make clear, this is the clearest—the joys of eternal life lie in the saying of the Lord, 'I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.'… After my hours of study, I went to see an old church over in the low garden grounds beyond the aqueduct. Before I could get through the doorway, a flock of goats had to pass out. I will tell His Serenity what I beheld. Better the wreck be cleaned from the face of the earth than desecrated. Holy ground once, holy ground forever."

"Where is the Church?" the Princess inquired.

"In the low grounds between the aqueduct, and the gates of St. Romain and Adrianople."

"It belongs to one of the Brotherhoods. They have farming right in the soil."

"I am sorry to hear it."

As she turned to her work again, he went on with his account of himself.

"I had then two hours and more till noon, and was at loss what to do. Finally I decided to go to the Port of Blacherne—a long walk, but not too long, considering my motive… Princess, have you heard of the Italian newly arrived?"

"What of him, pray?"

"He is the talk of the city, and if the half told of him be true, we must needs wonder. He travels in his own ship. Merchants have that habit, but he is not a merchant. Kings do so, but he is not a king. He came in saluting with a gun, in style becoming a great admiral; but if he is an admiral, his nationality is a secret. He also flies an unknown flag. They report him further as standing much on his deck in a suit of armor glistening like silver. And what is he? Mouth speaketh unto mouth, with no one to answer. They go then to his ship, pronouncing it the most perfect thing of the kind ever seen in the harbor. Those who have rowed around it say the sailors are not white men, but dark–faced creatures in turbans and black beards, un–Christian and ugly–looking. Fishermen and fruiterers have been permitted on deck—nobody else—and they, returning alive, say the rowers, of whom they caught glimpses, are blacker than the sailors. They also overheard strange noises below—voices not human."

The countenance of the Princess during this recital gradually changed; she seemed disposed to laugh at the exaggerations of the populace.

"So much for town–talk," Sergius continued. "To get sight of the ship, and of the mysterious magnate, I walked across the city to the Port of Blacherne, and was well rewarded. I found the ship drawn in to the quay, and the work of unloading her in progress. Parties of porters were attacking heaps of the cargo already on the landing. Where they were taking the goods I could not learn. I saw five horses lifted out of the hold, and led ashore over a bridge dropped from the vessel's side. Such horses I never before beheld. Two were grays, two bays, and one chestnut–colored. They looked at the sun with wide–open unwinking eyes; they inhaled the air as it were something to drink; their coats shone like silk; their manes were soft like the hair of children; their tails flared out in the breeze like flags; and everybody exclaimed: 'Arabs, Arabs!' There was a groom for

each horse—tall men, lean, dust–hued, turbaned, and in black gowns. At sight of the animals, an old Persian who, from his appearance, might have been grandfather of the grooms, begged permission—I could not understand the tongue he used—put his arms around the necks of the animals, and kissed them between the eyes, his own full of tears the while. I suppose they reminded him of his own country… Then two officers from the palace, representatives doubtless of the Emperor, rode out of the gate in armor, and immediately the stranger issued from his cabin, and came ashore. I confess I lost interest in the horses, although he went to them and scanned them over, lifting their feet and tapping their hoofs with the handle of a dagger. By that time the two officers were dismounted; and approaching with great ceremony, they notified him they had been sent by His Majesty to receive and conduct him to assigned quarters. He replied to them in excellent Greek, acknowledging His Majesty's graciousness, and the pleasure he would have in their escort. From the cabin, two of his men brought a complete equipment, and placed it on the chestnut steed. The furniture was all sheen of satin and gold. Another attendant brought his sword and shield; and after the sword was buckled around him, and the shield at his back, he took hold of the saddle with both hands, and swung himself into the seat with an ease remarkably in contrast with the action of his Greek conductors, who, in mounting, were compelled to make use of their stirrups. The cavalcade then passed the gate into the city."

"You saw him closely?" Lael asked.

"To get to his horse, he passed near me as I am to you, my little friend."

"What did he wear?"

"Oh, he was in armor. A cap of blue steel, with a silver spike on the crown—neck and shoulders covered with a hood of mail—body in a shirt of mail, a bead of silver in each link—limbs to the knees in mail. From the knees down there were splints of steel inlaid with silver; his shoes were of steel, and on the heels long golden spurs. The hood was clasped under the chin, leaving the face exposed—a handsome face, eyes black and bright, complexion olive, though slightly bloodless, expression pleasant."

"How old is he?"

"Twenty–six or seven. Altogether he reminded me of what I have heard of the warriors who used to go crusading."

"What following had he?"

This was from the Princess.

"I can only speak of what I saw—of the keepers of the horses, and of the other men, whom, in my unfamiliarity with military fashions, I will call equerry, armorer, and squire or page. What accounting is to be made of the ship's company, I leave, O Princess, to your better knowledge."

"My inquiry was of his personal suite."

"Then I cannot give you a better answer; but if I may say so much, the most unusual thing observable in his followers was, they were all Orientals—not one of them had a Christian appearance."

"Well"—and the Princess laid her needle down for the first time—"I see how easily a misunderstanding of the stranger may get abroad. Let me tell what I know of him… Directly he arrived, he despatched a letter to His Majesty, giving an account of himself. He is a soldier by profession, and a Christian; has spent much time in the Holy Land, where he acquired several Eastern languages; obtained permission from the Pontiff Nicholas to make war on the African pirates; manned his galley with captives; and, not wishing to return to his native land and engage in the baronial wars which prevail there at present, he offered his services to His Majesty. He is an Italian nobleman, entitled *Count Corti*, and submitted to His Majesty a certificate, under the hand and seal of the Holy Father, showing that the Holy Father knighted him, and authorized his crusade against the infidels. The preference for a following composed of Orientals is singular; but after all, it is only a matter of taste. The day may come, dear Sergius, when the Christian world will disapprove his method of getting title to servants; but it is not here now… If further discussion of the Count takes place in your presence, you are at liberty to tell what I tell you. At Blacherne yesterday I had the particulars, together with the other circumstance, that the Emperor gladly accepted the Italian's overture, and assigned him quarters in the Palace of Julian, with leave to moor his galley in the port there. Few noble foreigners have sought our Empire bringing better recommendations."

The fair lady then took up her needle, and was resuming work, when Lysander entered, and, after thumping the floor, announced: "Three o'clock."

The Princess silently arose, and passed out of the room; at the same time there was a commotion behind the curtain, and presently the other apartment was vacated. Sergius lingered a moment.

"Tell me now of yourself," Lael said, giving him her hand.

He kissed the hand fondly, and replied: "The clouds still hang low and dark over me; but my faith is not shaken; they will blow away; and in the meantime, dear little friend, the world is not all cheerless—you love me."

"Yes, I love you," she said, with childish simplicity.

"The Brotherhood has elected a new Hegumen," he continued.

"A good man, I hope."

"The violence with which he denounced me was the chief argument in his favor. But God is good. The Emperor, the Patriarch, and the Princess Irene remain steadfast. Against them the Hegumen will be slow in proceeding to my expulsion. I am not afraid. I will go on doing what I think right. Time and patience are good angels to the unjustly accused. But that any one should hold it a crime to have rescued you—O little friend, dear soul! See the live coal which does not cease burning!"

"And Nilo?"

"He wants nothing in the way of comforts."

"I will go see the poor man the first thing when I get out."

"His cell in the Cynegion is well furnished. The officer in charge has orders direct from the Emperor to see that he suffers no harm. I saw him day before yesterday. He does not know why he is a prisoner, but behaves quietly. I took him a supply of tools, and he passes the time making things in use in his country, mostly implements of war and hunting. The walls of his cell are hung with bows, arrows and lances of such curious form that there is always quite a throng to see them. He actually divides honor with Tamerlane, the king of the lions."

"It should be a very noble lion, for that."

Sergius, seeing her humor, went on: "You say truly, little friend. He has in hand a net of strong thread and thousands of meshes already. 'What is it for?' I asked. In his pantomimic way he gave me to understand: 'In my country we hunt lions with it.' 'How?' said I. And he showed me two balls of lead, one in each corner of the net. Taking the balls in his hands: 'Now we are in front of the game—now it springs at us—up they go this way.' He gave the balls a peculiar toss which sent them up and forward on separating lines. The woven threads spread out in the air like a yellow mist, and I could see the result—the brute caught in the meshes, and entangled. Then the brave fellow proceeded with his pantomime. He threw himself to one side out of the way of the leap—drew a sword, and stabbed and stabbed—and the triumph in his face told me plainly enough. 'There—he is dead!' Just now he is engaged on another work scarcely less interesting to him. A dealer in ivory sent him an elephant's tusk, and he is covering it with the story of a campaign. You see the warriors setting out on the march—in another picture they are in battle—a cloud of arrows in flight—shields on arm—bows bent—and a forest of spears. From the large end he is working down toward the point. The finish will be a victory, and a return with captives and plunder immeasurable… He is well cared for; yet he keeps asking me about his master the Prince of India. Where is he? When will he come? When he turns to that subject I do not need words from him. His soul gets into his eyes. I tell him the Prince is dead. He shakes his head: 'No, no!' and sweeping a circle in the air, he brings his hands to his breast, as to say: 'No, he is travelling—he will come back for me.'"

Sergius had become so intent upon the description that he lost sight of his hearer; but now a sob recalled him. Bending lower over the hand, he caressed it more assiduously than ever, afraid to look into her face. When at length the sobbing ceased, he arose and said, shamefacedly:

"O dear little friend, you forgive me, do you not?"

From his manner one would have thought he had committed an offence far out of the pale of condonement.

"Poor Sergius," she said. "It is for me to think of you, not you of me." He tried to look cheerful.

"It was stupid in me. I will be more careful. Your pardon is a sweet gift to take away… The Princess is going to Sancta Sophia, and she may want me. To–morrow—until to–morrow—good–by."

This time he stooped, and kissed her on the forehead; next moment she was alone.

CHAPTER VI

COUNT CORTI IN SANCTA SOPHIA

The Palace of Julian arose the chief embellishment of a large square enclosure on the sea front southeast of the landmark at present called the Burnt Column, and, like other imperial properties of the kind, it was an aggregation of buildings irregular in form and style, and more or less ornate and imposing. A garden stretched around it. The founder, wanting private harborage for his galleys and swarm of lesser boats, dug a basin just inside the city wall, and flooded it with pure Marmoran water; then, for ingress and egress at his sovereign will, he slashed the wall, and of the breach made the *Port of Julian*.**[42]**

Count Corti found the Palace well preserved in and out. He had not purposed hiding himself, yet it was desirable to keep his followers apart much as possible; and for that a situation more to his wish could scarcely have been chosen in the capital.

Issuing from the front door, a minute's walk through a section of the garden brought him to a stairway defended on both sides with massive balustrading. The flight ended in a spacious paved landing; whence, looking back and up, he could see two immense columnar pedestals surmounted by statues, while forward extended the basin, a sheet of water on which, white and light as a gull, his galley rested. He had but to call the watchman on its deck, and a small boat would come to him in a trice. He congratulated himself upon the lodgement.

The portion of the Palace assigned him was in the south end; and, although he enlisted a number of skilful upholsterers, a week and more was industriously taken with interior arrangements for himself, and in providing for the comfort and well–being of his horses; for it is to be said in passing, he had caught enough of the spirit of the nomadic Turk to rate the courser which was to bear him possibly through foughten fields

amongst the first in his affections. In this preparation, keeping the scheme to which his master had devoted him ever present, he required no teaching to point out the policy of giving his establishment an air of permanence as well as splendor.

Occupied as he was, he had nevertheless snatched time to look in upon the Hippodrome, and walk once around the Bucoleon and Sancta Sophia. From a high pavilion overhanging his quarters, he had surveyed the stretches of city in the west and southwest, sensible of a lively desire to become intimately acquainted with the bizarre panorama of hills behind hills, so wonderfully house and church crowned.

To say truth, however, the Count was anxious to hear from the Sultan before beginning a career. The man who was to be sent to him might appear any hour, making it advisable to keep close home. He had a report of the journey to Italy, and of succeeding events, including his arrival at Constantinople, ready draughted, and was impatient to forward it. A word of approval from Mahommed would be to him like a new spirit given. He counted upon it as a cure for his melancholia.

Viewing the galley one day, he looked across the basin to where the guard of the Port was being changed, and was struck with the foreign air of the officer of the relief. This, it happened, was singularly pertinent to a problem which had been disturbing his active mind—how he could most safely keep in communication with Mahommed, or, more particularly, how the Sultan's messenger could come with the most freedom and go with the least hindrance. A solution now presented itself. If the Emperor intrusted the guardianship of the gate to one foreigner, why not to another? In other words, why not have the duty committed to himself and his people? Not improbably the charge might be proposed to him; he would wait awhile, and see; if, however, he had to formally request it, could anything be more plausibly suggestive than the relation between the captaincy of that Port and residence in the Palace of Julian? The idea was too natural to be refused; if granted, he was master of the situation. It would be like holding the keys of the city. He could send out and admit as need demanded; and

then, if flight became imperative, behold a line of retreat! Here was his galley—yonder the way out.

While he pondered the matter, a servant brought him notice of an officer from Blacherne in waiting. Responding immediately, he found our ancient friend the Dean in the reception room, bringing the announcement that His Majesty the Emperor had appointed audience for him next day at noon; or, if the hour was not entirely convenient, would the Count be pleased to designate another? His Majesty was aware of the attention needful to a satisfactory settlement in strange quarters, and had not interrupted him earlier; for which he prayed pardon.

The Count accepted the time set; after which he conducted his visitor through his apartments, omitting none of them; from the kitchen he even carried him to the stable, whence he had the horses brought one by one. Hospitality and confidence could go no further, and he was amply rewarded. The important functionary was pleased with all he saw, and with nothing more than Corti himself. There could not be a doubt of the friendliness of the report he would take back to Blacherne. In short, the Count's training in a court dominated by suspicion to a greater degree even than the court in Constantinople was drawn upon most successfully. A glass of wine at parting redolent with the perfume of the richest Italian vintage fixed the new–comer's standing in the Dean's heart. If there had been the least insufficiency in the emblazoned certificate of the Holy Father, here was a swift witness in confirmation.

The day was destined to be eventful to the Count. While he was entertaining the Dean, the men on the deck of the galley, unused to Byzantine customs, were startled by a cry, long, swelling, then mournfully decadent. Glancing in the direction from which it came, they saw a black boat sweeping through the water–way of the Port. A man of dubious complexion, tall and lithe, his scant garments originally white, now stiff with dirt of many hues, a ragged red head–cloth illy confining his coarse black hair, stood in the bow shouting, and holding up a wooden tray covered with fish. The sentinel to whom he thus offered the stock shook his head, but allowed him to pass. At the galley's side there was an

interchange of stares between the sailors and the fishermen—such the tenants of the black craft were—leaving it doubtful which side was most astonished. Straightway the fellow in the bow opened conversation, trying several tongues, till finally he essayed the Arabic.

"Who are you?"

"Sailors."

"Where from?"

"Tripoli."

"Children of the Prophet?"

"We believe in Allah and the Last Day, and observe prayer, and pay the appointed alms, and dread none but Allah; we are among the rightly guided."**[43]**

"Blessed be Allah! May his name be exalted here and everywhere!" the fisherman returned; adding immediately: "Whom serve you?"

"A *Scherif* from Italy."

"How is he called?"

"The Count."

"Where is he?"

"In the Palace yonder."

"A Christian?"

"A Christian with an Eastern tongue; and he knows the hours of prayer, and observes them."

"Does he reside here?"

"He is Lord of the Palace."

"When did he arrive?"

"Since the moon fulled."

"Does he want fish?"

The men on the ship laughed.

"Go ask him."

"That is his landing there?"

"Yes."

"All men who live down by the sea eat fish—when they can get them," the dealer said, solemnly. Turning then to his rowers, he bade them: "Forward to the landing."

There he stepped out, dextrously balanced the tray on his head, ascended the stairs, and in front of the great house went persistently from door to door until he came to that of the Count.

"Fish?" he asked the man who answered his knock.

"I will see."

The doorkeeper returned shortly, and said, "No."

"Are you a Moslem?" the fisherman inquired.

"Yes. Blessed be Allah for the right understanding!"

"So am I. Now let me see the master. I want to furnish him with fish for the season."

"He is engaged."

"I will wait for him. Tell him my catch is this morning's—red mullets and choice cuts from a royal sword–fish that leaped ten feet in the air with the spear in his back."

Thereupon he deposited the tray, and took seat by it, much as to say, Time is of no consequence to me. Ere long the Count appeared with the Dean. He glanced at the tray, then at the fisherman—to the latter he gave a second look.

"What beautiful fish!" he said, to the Dean.

"Yes, yes—there are no fish pastures like those of our Bosphorus."

"How do you call this kind?"

"Mullets—red mullets. The old Romans used to fatten them in tanks."

"I thought I had seen their like on our Italian coasts. How do you prepare them for the table?"

"We fry them, Count, in olive oil—pure oil."

All this time Corti was studying the fisherman.

"What meal, pray, will fashion allow them to me dished?" he went on.

"For breakfast especially; though when you come to dine with His Majesty do not be surprised to see them early in course."

"Pardon the detention, my Lord—I will make trial of these in the morning." Then to the fisherman the Count said, carelessly: "Keep thy place until I return."

Corti saw the Dean out of the eastern gate of the enclosure, and returned.

"What, still here!" he said, to the dealer. "Well, go with the doorkeeper to the kitchen. The cook will take what he needs for to–morrow." Speaking to the doorkeeper then: "Bring the man to me. I am fond of fishing, and should like to talk with him about his methods. Sometime he may be willing to take me with him."

By and by the monger was shown into the Count's room, where there was a table, with books and writing material—a corner room full lighted by windows in the south and east. When they were alone, the two gazed at each other.

"Ali, son of Abed–din!" said the Count. "Is it thou?"

"O Emir! All of me that is not fish is the Ali thou hast named."

"God is great!" the first exclaimed.

"Blessed be God!" the other answered.

They were acquaintances of long standing.

Then Ali took the red rag from his head, and from its folds produced a strip of fine parchment with writing on it impervious to water. "Behold, Emir! It is for thee."

The Count received the scrip and read:

"This is he I promised to send. He has money for thee. Thou mayst trust him. Tell me this time of thyself first; then of her; but always after of her first. My soul is scorching with impatience."

There was no date to the screed nor was it signed; yet the Count put it to his forehead and lips. He knew the writing as he knew his own hand.

"O Ali!" he said, his eyes aglow. "Hereafter thou shalt be Ali the Faithful, son of Abed–din the Faithful."

Ali replied with a rueful look: "It is well. What a time I have had waiting for you! Much I fear my bones will never void the damps blown into them by the winter winds, and I perched on the cross–sticks of a floating *dallyan*… I have money for you, O Emir! and the keeping it has given me care more than enough to turn another man older than his mother. I will bring it to–morrow; after which I shall say twenty prayers to the Prophet—blessed be his name!—where now I say one."

"No, not to–morrow, Ali, but the day after when thou bringest me another supply of fish. There is danger in coming too often—and for that, thou must go now. Staying too long is dangerous as coming too often… But tell me of our master. Is he indeed the Sultan of Sultans he promised to be? Is he well? Where is he? What is he doing?"

"Not so fast, O Emir, not so fast, I pray you! Better a double mouthful of stale porpoise fat, with a fin bone in it, than so many questions at once."

"Oh, but I have been so long in the slow–moving Christian world without news!"

"Verily, O Emir, Padishah Mahommed will be greatest of the *Gabour* eaters since Padishah Othman—that to your first. He is well. His bones have reached their utmost limit, but his soul keeps growing—that to your second. He holds himself at Adrianople. Men say he is building mosques. I say he is building cannon to shoot bullets big as his father's tomb; when they are fired, the faithful at Medina will hear the noise, and think it thunder—that to your third. And as to his doing— getting ready for war, meaning business for everybody, from the Shiek–ul–Islam to the thieving tax–farmers of Bagdad—to the Kislar–Jinn of Abad–on with them. He has the census finished, and now the Pachas go listing the able–bodied, of whom they have half a million, with as many more behind. They say the young master means to make a *sandjak* of unbelieving Europe."

"Enough, Ali!—the rest next time."

The Count went to the table, and from a secret drawer brought a package wrapped in leather, and sealed carefully.

"This for our Lord—exalted be his name! How wilt thou take it?"

Ali laughed.

"In my tray to the boat, but the fish are fresh, and there are flowers of worse odor in Cashmere. So, O Emir, for this once. Next time, and thereafter, I will have a hiding–place ready."

"Now, Ali, farewell. Thy name shall be sweet in our master's ears as a girl–song to the moon of Ramazan. I will see to it."

Ali took the package, and hid it in the bosom of his dirty shirt. When he passed out of the front door, it lay undistinguishable under the fish and fish meat; and he whispered to the Count in going: "I have an order from the Governor of the White Castle for my unsold stock. God is great!"

Corti, left alone, flung himself on a chair. He had word from Mahommed — that upon which he counted so certainly as a charm in counteraction of the depression taking possession of his spirit. There it was in his hand, a declaration of confidence unheard of in an Oriental despot. Yet the effect was wanting. Even as he sat thinking the despondency deepened. He groped for the reason in vain. He strove for cheer in the big war of which Ali had spoken—in the roar of cannon, like thunder in Medina—in Europe a Sultanic *sandjak*. He could only smile at the exaggeration. In fact, his trouble was the one common to every fine nature in a false position. His business was to deceive and betray—whom? The degradation was casting its shadow before. Heaven help when the eclipse should be full!

For relief he read the screed again: "Tell me this time of thyself first; then of *her*."… Ah, yes, the kinswoman of the Emperor! He must devise a way to her acquaintance, and speedily. And casting about for it, he became restless, and finally resolved to go out into the city. He sent for the chestnut Arab, and putting on the steel cap and golden spurs had from the Holy Father was soon in the saddle.

It was about three o'clock afternoon, with a wind tempered to mildness by a bright sun. The streets were thronged, while the balconies and overhanging windows had their groups on the lookout for entertainment and gossip. As may be fancied the knightly rider and gallant barb, followed by a dark–skinned, turbaned servant in Moorish costume,

attracted attention. Neither master nor man appeared to give heed to the eager looks and sometimes over–loud questions with which they were pursued.

Turning northward presently, the Count caught sight of the dome of Sancta Sophia. It seemed to him a vast, upturned silver bowl glistening in the sky, and he drew rein involuntarily, wondering how it could be upheld; then he was taken with a wish to go in, and study the problem. Having heard from Mahommed, he was lord of his time, and here was noble diversion.

In front of the venerable edifice, he gave his horse to the dark–faced servant, and entered the outer court unattended.

A company, mixed apparently of every variety of persons, soldiers, civilians, monks, and women, held the pavement in scattered groups; and while he halted a moment to survey the exterior of the building, cold and grimly plain from cornice to base, he became himself an object of remark to them. About the same time a train of monastics, bareheaded, and in long gray gowns, turned in from the street, chanting monotonously, and in most intensely nasal tones. The Count, attracted by their pale faces, hollow eyes and unkept beards, waited for them to cross the court. Unkept their beards certainly were, but not white. This was the beginning of the observation he afterward despatched to Mahommed: Only the walls of Byzantium remain for her defence; the Church has absorbed her young men; the sword is discarded for the rosary. Nor could he help remarking that whereas the *frati* of Italy were fat, rubicund, and jolly, these seemed in search of death through the severest penitential methods. His thought recurring to the house again, he remembered having heard how every hour of every day from five o'clock in the morning to midnight was filled with religious service of some kind in Sancta Sophia.

A few stone steps the full length of the court led up to five great doors of bronze standing wide open; and as the train took one of the latter and began to disappear, he chose another, and walked fast in order to witness the entry. Brought thus into the immense vestibule, he stopped, and at once forgot the gray brethren. Look where he might, at the walls, and now up to

the ceiling, every inch of space wore the mellowed brightness of mosaic wrought in cubes of glass exquisitely graduated in color. What could he do but stand and gaze at the Christ in the act of judging the world? Such a cartoon had never entered his imagination. The train was gone when he awoke ready to proceed.

There were then nine doors also of bronze conducting from the vestibule. The central and larger one was nearest him. Pushed lightly, it swung open on noiseless hinges; a step or two, and he stood in the nave or auditorium of the Holy House.

The reader will doubtless remember how Duke Vlodomir, the grandson of Olga, the Russian, coming to Constantinople to receive a bride, entered Sancta Sophia the first time, and from being transfixed by what he saw and heard, fell down a convert to Christianity. Not unlike was the effect upon Corti. In a sense he, too, was an unbeliever semi–barbaric in education. Many were the hours he had spent with Mahommed while the latter, indulging his taste, built palaces and mosques on paper, striving for vastness and original splendor. But what was the Prince's utmost achievement in comparison with this interior? Had it been an ocean grotto, another Caprian cave, bursting with all imaginable revelations of light and color, he could not have been more deeply impressed. Without architectural knowledge; acquainted with few of the devices employed in edificial construction, and still less with the mysterious power of combination peculiar to genius groping for effects in form, dimensions, and arrangement of stone on stone with beautiful and sublime intent; yet he had a soul to be intensely moved by such effects when actually set before his eyes. He walked forward slowly four or five steps from the door, looking with excited vision—not at details or to detect the composition of any of the world of objects constituting the view, or with a thought of height, breadth, depth, or value—the marbles of the floor rich in multiformity and hues, and reflective as motionless water, the historic pillars, the varied arches, the extending galleries, the cornices, friezes, balustrades, crosses of gold, mosaics, the windows and interlacing rays of light, brilliance here, shadows yonder—the apse in the east, and the altar built up in it starry with burning candles and glittering with prismatic

gleams shot from precious stones and metals in every conceivable form of grace—lamps, cups, vases, candlesticks, cloths, banners, crucifixes, canopies, chairs, Madonnas, Child Christs and Christs Crucified—and over all, over lesser domes, over arches apparently swinging in the air, broad, high, near yet far away, the dome of Sancta Sophia, defiant of imitation, like unto itself alone, a younger sky within the elder—these, while he took those few steps, merged and ran together in a unity which set his senses to reeling, and made question and thought alike impossible.

How long the Count stood thus lost to himself in the glory and greatness of the place, he never knew. The awakening was brought about by a strain of choral music, which, pouring from the vicinity of the altar somewhere, flooded the nave, vast as it was, from floor to dome. No voice more fitting could be imagined; and it seemed addressing itself to him especially. He trembled, and began to think.

First there came to him a comparison in which the Kaaba was a relative. He recalled the day he fell dying at the corner under the Black Stone. He saw the draped heap funereally dismal in the midst of the cloisters. How bare and poor it seemed to him now! He remembered the visages and howling of the demoniac wretches struggling to kiss the stone, though with his own kiss he had just planted it with death. How different the worship here!… This, he thought next, was his mother's religion. And what more natural than that he should see that mother descending to the chapel in her widow's weeds to pray for him? Tears filled his eyes. His heart arose chokingly in his throat. Why should not her religion be his? It was the first time he had put the question to himself directly; and he went further with it. What though Allah of the Islamite and Jehovah of the Hebrew were the same?—What though the Koran and the Bible proceeded from the same inspiration?—What though Mahomet and Christ were alike Sons of God? There were differences in the worship, differences in the personality of the worshippers. Why, except to allow every man a choice according to his ideas of the proper and best in form and companionship? And the spirit swelled within him as he asked, Who are my brethren? They who stole me from my father's house, who slew my father, who robbed my mother of the

lights of life, and left her to the darkness of mourning and the bitterness of ungratified hope—were not they the brethren of my brethren?

At that moment an old man appeared before the altar with assistants in rich canonicals. One placed on the elder's head what seemed a crown all a mass of flaming jewels; another laid upon him a cloak of cloth of gold; a third slipped a ring over one of his fingers; whereupon the venerable celebrant drew nearer the altar, and, after a prayer, took up a chalice and raised it as if in honor to an image of Christ on a cross in the agonies of crucifixion. Then suddenly the choir poured its triumphal thunder abroad until the floor, and galleries, and pendant lamps seemed to vibrate. The assistants and worshippers sank upon their knees, and ere he was aware the Count was in the same attitude of devotion.

The posture consisted perfectly with policy, his mission considered. Soon or late he would have to adopt every form and observance of Christian worship. In this performance, however, there was no premeditation, no calculation. In his exaltation of soul he fancied he heard a voice passing with the tempestuous jubilation of the singers: "On thy knees, O apostate! On thy knees! God is here!"

But his was a combative nature; and coming to himself, and not understanding clearly the cause of his prostration, he presently arose. Of the worshippers in sight, he alone was then standing, and the sonorous music ringing on, he was beginning to doubt the propriety of his action, when a number of women, unobserved before, issued from a shaded corner at the right of the apse, fell into processional order, and advanced slowly toward him.

One moved by herself in front. A reflection of her form upon the polished floor lent uncertainty to her stature, and gave her an appearance of walking on water. Those following were plainly her attendants. They were all veiled; while a white mantle fell from her left shoulder, its ends lost in the folds of the train of her gown, leaving the head, face, and neck bare. Her manner, noticeable in the distance even, was dignified without hauteur, simple, serious, free of affectation. She was not thinking of herself… Nearer—he heard no foot–fall. Now and then she glided through

slanting rays of soft, white light cast from upper windows, and they seemed to derive ethereality from her… Nearer—and he could see the marvellous pose of the head, and the action of the figure, never incarnation more graceful… Yet nearer—he beheld her face, in complexion a child's, in expression a woman's. The eyes were downcast, the lips moved. She might have been the theme of the music sweeping around her in acclamatory waves, drowning the part she was carrying in suppressed murmur. He gazed steadfastly at the countenance. The light upon the forehead was an increasing radiance, like a star's refined by passage through the atmospheres of infinite space. A man insensitive to beauty in woman never was, never will be. Vows cannot alter nature; neither can monkish garbs nor years; and it is knowledge of this which makes every woman willing to last sacrifices for the gift; it is power to her, vulgarizing accessories like wealth, coronets and thrones. With this confession in mind, words are not needed to inform the reader of the thrills which assailed the Count while the marvel approached.

The service was over as to her, and she was evidently seeking to retire by the main door; but as he stood in front of it, she came within two or three steps before noticing him. Then she stopped suddenly, astonished by the figure in shining armor. A flush overspread her face; smiling at her alarm, she spoke: "I pray pardon, Sir Knight, for disturbing thy devotions."

"And I, fair lady, am grateful to Heaven that it placed me in thy way to the door unintentionally."

He stepped aside, and she passed on and out.

The interior of the church, but a minute before so overwhelmingly magnificent and impressive, became commonplace and dull. The singing rolled on unheard. His eyes fixed on the door through which she went; his sensations were as if awakening from a dream in which he had seen a heavenly visitant, and been permitted to speak to it.

The spell ceased with the music; then, with swift returning sense, he remembered Mahommed's saying: "Thou wilt know her at sight."

And he knew her—the *Her* of the screed brought only that day by Ali.

Nor less distinctly did he recall every incident of the parting with Mahommed, every word, every injunction—the return of the ruby ring, even then doubtless upon the imperious master's third finger, a subject of hourly study—the further speech, "They say whoever looketh at her is thenceforward her lover"—and the final charge, with its particulars, concluding: "Forget not that in Constantinople, when I come, I am to receive her from thy hand peerless in all things as I left her."

His shoes of steel were strangely heavy when he regained his horse at the edge of the court. For the first time in years, he climbed into the saddle using the stirrup like a man reft of youth. He would love the woman—he could not help it. Did not every man love her at sight?

The idea colored everything as he rode slowly back to his quarters.

Dismounting at the door, it plied him with the repetition, *Every man loves her at sight*.

He thought of training himself to hate her, but none the less through the hours of the night he heard the refrain, *Every man loves her at sight*.

In a clearer condition, his very inability to shut her out of mind, despite his thousand efforts of will, would have taught him that another judgment was upon him.

HE LOVED HER.

CHAPTER VII

COUNT CORTI TO MAHOMMED

At noon the days are a little more yellow, and the shadows a trifle longer, while at evening the snows on the far mountains give the air a coolness gently admonitory of the changing season; with these exceptions there is scarcely a difference between the September to which we now come and the closing stages of June.

Count Corti is fully settled in his position. Withal, however, he is very miserable. A new light has been let in upon his being. He finds it a severe trial to serve a Mahommedan, knowing himself a Christian born, and still more difficult trying to be a Turk, knowing himself an Italian. The stings grow sharper as experience makes it plainer that he is nefariously helping those whom he ought to regard enemies destroy an Emperor and people who never gave him offence. Worst of all, most crushing to spirit, is his passion for the Princess Irene while under obligations to Mahommed prohibitory of every hope, dream, and self–promise ordinarily the sweetest incidents of love.

The person with a mental ailment curable by prompt decision, who yet goes about debating what to do, will ere long find his will power so weakened as to leave him a confirmed wreck. Count Corti seemed likely to become an instance in point. The months since his visit to the paternal castle in Italy, really the beginning of the conflicts tossing him now here, now there, were full of warnings he could but hear; still he continued his course.

His reports to Mahommed were frequent, and as they are of importance to our story, we think it advisable to quote from some of them.

The following is from his first communication after the visit to Sancta Sophia:

"I cast myself at your feet, O my Lord, praying Allah to keep you in health, and strengthen the wise designs which occupy you incessantly… You bade me always speak first of the kinswoman of the Emperor. Yesterday I rode to the Church supreme in the veneration of the Greeks, erected, it is said, by the Emperor Justinian. Its vastness amazed me, and, knowing my Lord's love for such creations, I declare, were there no other incentive to the conquest of this unbelieving city than the reduction of Sancta Sophia to the religious usages of Islam, its possession would alone justify my Lord's best effort, regardless of life and treasure. The riches accumulated in it through the ages are incalculable; nevertheless its splendors, dazzling as the sun, varied as a rainbow, sunk out of sight when the Princess Irene passed me so near that I had a perfect view of her. Her face is composed of the light of unnumbered stars. The union of all the graces in her person is so far above words that Hafiz, my Lord's prince of poets, would have been dumb before her, or, if he had spoken, it would have been to say, She is the Song of Songs impossible to verse. She spoke to me as she moved by, and her voice was the voice of Love. Yet she had the dignity of a Queen governing the world through a conqueror such as my Lord is to be. Then, the door having closed upon her, I was ready to declare, as I now do, were there no other incentive to the conquest of this unbelieving city than the possession of the womanly perfections belonging to her, she would justify war to the exhaustion of the universe. O my Lord, thou only art worthy of her! And how infinite will be my happiness, if the Prophet through his powerful intercessions with the Most Merciful, permits me to be the servant instrumental in bringing her safely to thy arms!" This report concluded:

"By appointment of His Majesty, the Emperor, I had audience with him yesterday at his High Residence, the Palace of Blacherne. The Court was in full attendance, and, after my presentation to His Majesty, I was introduced to its members. The ceremony was in charge of the Grand Chamberlain, that Phranza with whom my Lord is acquainted. Much I feared lest he should recognize me. Fortunately he is dull and philosophical, and too much given to study of things abstract and far away to be mindful of those close under his nose. Duke Notaras was there also.

He conversed with me about Italy. Fortunately I knew more about the *Gabour* country than he—its nobles, cities, manners, and present conditions. He thanked me for information, and when he had my account of the affair which brought me the invaluable certificate of the Bishop of Rome he gave over sounding me. I have more reason to be watchful of him than all the rest of the court; *so has the Emperor*. Phranza is a man to be spared. Notaras is a man to be bowstrung… I flatter myself the Emperor is my friend. In another month I shall be intrenched in his confidence. He is brave, but weak. An excellent general without lieutenants, without soldiers, and too generous and trustful for a politician, too religious for a statesman. His time is occupied entirely with priests and priestly ceremonies. My Lord will appreciate the resort which enabled me to encamp myself in his trust. Of the five Arab horses I brought with me from Aleppo, I gave him one—a gray, superior to the best he has in his stables. He and his courtiers descended in a body to look at the barb and admire it."

From the third report:

"A dinner at the High Residence. There were present officers of the army and navy, members of the Court, the Patriarch, a number of the Clergy—Hegumen, as they are called—and the Princess Irene, with a large suite of highborn ladies married and unmarried. His Majesty was the Sun of the occasion, the Princess was the Moon. He sat on a raised seat at one side of the table; she opposite him; the company according to rank, on their right and left. I had eyes for the Moon only, thinking how soon my Lord would be her source of light, and that her loveliness, made up of every loveliness else in the world, would then be the fitting complement of my Lord's glory… His Majesty did me the honor to lead me to her, and she did me the higher honor of permitting me to kiss her hand. In further thought of what she was to my Lord, I was about making her a salaam, but remembered myself—Italians are not given to that mode of salutation, while the Greeks reserve it for the Emperor, or Basileus as he is sometimes called… She condescended to talk with me. Her graces of mind are like those of her person—adorable… I was very deferent, and yielded the choice of topics. She chose two—religion and arms. Had she been a

man, she would have been a soldier; being a woman, she is a religious devotee. There is nothing of which she is more desirous than the restoration of the Holy Sepulchre to the Christian powers. She asked me if it were true the Holy Father commissioned me to make war on the Tripolitan pirates, and when I said yes, she replied with a fervor truly engaging: 'The practice of arms would be the noblest of occupations if it were given solely to crusading.'… She then adverted to the Holy Father. I infer from her speaking of the Bishop of Rome as the Holy Father that she inclines to the party which believes the Bishop rightfully the head of the Church. How did he look? Was he a learned man? Did he set a becoming example to his Clergy? Was he liberal and tolerant? If great calamity were to threaten Christianity in the East, would he lend it material help?… My Lord will have a time winning the Princess over to the Right Understanding; but in the fields of Love who ever repented him of his labor? When my Lord was a boy, he once amused himself training a raven and a bird of paradise to talk. The raven at length came to say, 'O Allah, Allah!' The other bird was beyond teaching, yet my Lord loved it the best, and excused his partiality: 'Oh, its feathers are so brilliant!'"

Again:

"A few days ago, I rode out of the Golden Gate, and turning to the right, pursued along the great moat to the Gate St. Romain. The wall, or rather the walls, of the city were on my right hand, and it is an imposing work. The moat is in places so cumbered I doubt if it can be everywhere flooded… I bought some snow–water of a peddler, and examined the Gate in and out. Its central position makes it a key of first importance. Thence I journeyed on surveying the road and adjacent country up far as the Adrianople gate… I hope my Lord will find the enclosed map of my reconnoissance satisfactory. It is at least reliable."

Again:

"His Majesty indulged us with a hawking party. We rode to the Belgrade forest from which Constantinople is chiefly though not entirely supplied with water… My Lord's Flower of Flowers, the Princess, was of the company. I offered her my chestnut courser, but she preferred a jennet.

Remembering your instructions, O my Lord, I kept close to her bridle. She rides wonderfully well; yet if she had fallen, how many prayers to the Prophet, what amount of alms to the poor, would have availed me with my Lord?… Riding is a lost art with the Greeks, if the ever possessed it. The falcon killed a heron beyond a hill which none of them, except the Emperor, dared cross in their saddles. Some day I will show them how we of my Lord's loving ride… The Princess came safely home."

Again:

"O my Lord in duty always!… I paid the usual daily visit to the Princess, and kissed her hand upon my admission and departing. She has this quality above other women—she is always the same. The planets differ from her in that they are sometimes overcast by clouds… From her house, I rode to the imperial arsenal, situated in the ground story of the Hippodrome, northern side.**[44]** It is well stored with implements of offence and defence—mangonels, balistas, arbalists, rams—cranes for repairing breaches—lances, javelins, swords, axes, shields, scutums, pavises, armor—timber for ships—cressets for night work—ironmonger machines—arquebuses, but of antique patterns—quarrels and arrows in countless sheaves—bows of every style. In brief, as my Lord's soul is dauntless, as he is an eagle, which does not abandon the firmament scared by the gleam of a huntsman's helmet in the valley, he can bear to hear that the Emperor keeps prepared for the emergencies of war. Indeed, were His Majesty as watchful in other respects, he would be dangerous. Who are to serve all these stores? His native soldiers are not enough to make a bodyguard for my Lord. Only the walls of Byzantium remain for her defence. The Church has swallowed the young men; the sword is discarded for the rosary. Unless the warriors of the West succor her, she will be an easy prey."

Again:

"My Lord enjoined me to be royal… I have just returned from a sail up the Bosphorus to the Black Sea in my galley. The decks were crowded with guests. Under a silken pavilion pitched on the roof of my cabin, there was a throne for the Princess Irene, and she shone as the central jewel in a kingly crown… We cast anchor in the bay of Therapia, and went ashore to

her palace and gardens. On the outside face of one of the gate–columns, she showed me a brass plate. I recognized my Lord's signature and safeguard, and came near saluting them with a *rik'rath*, but restraining myself, asked her innocently, 'What it was?' O my Lord, verily I congratulate you! She blushed, and cast down her eyes, and her voice trembled while she answered: 'They say the Prince Mahommed nailed it there.' 'What Prince Mahommed?' 'He who is now Sultan of the Turks.' 'He has been here, then? Did you see him?' 'I saw an Arab story–teller.' Her face was the hue of a scarlet poppy, and I feared to go further than ask concerning the plate: 'What does it mean?' And she returned: 'The Turks never go by without prostrating themselves before it. They say it is notice to them that I, and my house and grounds, are sacred from their intrusion.' And then I said: 'Amongst peoples of the East and the Desert, down far as the Barbary coast, the Sultan Mahommed has high fame for chivalry. His bounties to those once fortunate enough to excite his regard are inexhaustible.' She would have had me speak further of you, but out of caution, I was driven to declare I knew nothing beyond the hearsay of the Islamites among whom I had been here and there cast… My Lord will not require me to describe the palace by Therapia. He has seen it… The Princess remained there. I was at sore loss, not knowing how I could continue to make report of her to my Lord, until, to my relief she invited me to visit her."

Again:

"I am glad to say, for my Lord's sake, that the October winds, sweeping down from the Black Sea, have compelled his Princess to return to her house in the city, where she will abide till the summer comes again. I saw her to–day. The country life has retouched her cheeks with a just–sufficient stain of red roses; her lips are scarlet, as if she had been mincing fresh–blown bloom of pomegranates; her eyes are clear as a crooning baby's; her neck is downy—round as a white dove's; in her movements afoot, she reminds me of the swaying of a lily–stalk brushed softly by butterflies and humming–birds, attracted to its open cup of paradisean wax. Oh, if I could but tell her of my Lord!"…

This report was lengthy, and included the account of an episode more personal to the Sultanic emissary than any before given his master. It was dated October. The subjoined extracts may prove interesting.

… "Everybody in the East has heard of the Hippodrome, whither I went one day last week, and again yesterday. It was the mighty edifice in which Byzantine vanity aired itself through hundreds of years. But little of it is now left standing. At the north end of an area probably seventy paces wide, and four hundred long, is a defaced structure with a ground floor containing the arsenal, and on that, boxes filled with seats. A lesser building rises above the boxes which is said to have been a palace called the *Kathisma*, from which the Emperor looked down upon the various amusements of the people, such as chariot racing, and battles between the Blue and Green factions. Around the area from the *Kathisma* lie hills of brick and marble—enough to build the Palace as yet hid in my Lord's dreams, and a mosque to becomingly house our Mohammedan religion. In the midst, marking a line central of the race–course, are three relics—a square pillar quite a hundred feet high, bare now, but covered once with plates of brass—an obelisk from Egypt—and a twisted bronze column, representing three writhing serpents, their heads in air.**[45]** … The present Emperor does not honor the ruin with his presence; but the people come, and sitting in the boxes under the KATHISMA, and standing on the heaps near by, find diversion watching the officers and soldiers exercising their horses along the area… My Lord must know, in the next place, that there is in the city a son of the Orchan who terms himself lawful heir of Solyman of blessed memory—the Orchan pretender to my Lord's throne, whom the Greeks have been keeping in mock confinement—the Orchan who is the subject of the present Emperor's demand on my Lord for an increase of the stipend heretofore paid for the impostor's support. The son of the pretender, being a Turk, affects the martial practices prevalent with us, and enjoys notoriety for accomplishments as a horseman, and in the tourney play djerid. He is even accredited with an intention of one day taking the field against my Lord—this when his father, the old Orchan, dies… When I entered the Hippodrome one day last week, Orchan the younger occupied the arena before the Kathisma. The boxes were well filled with spectators.

Some officers of my acquaintance were present, mounted like myself, and they accosted me politely, and eulogized the performance. Afterwhile I joined in their commendation, but ventured to say I had seen better exercise during my sojourn among the infidels in the Holy Land. They asked me if I had any skill. 'I cannot call it skill,' I said; 'but my instruction was from a noble master, the Sheik of the Jordan.' Nothing would rest them then but a trial. At length I assented on condition that the Turk would engage me in a tourney or a combat without quarter—bow, cimeter, spear—on horseback and in Moslem armor. They were astonished, but agreed to carry the challenge… Now, O my Lord, do not condemn me. My residence here has extended into months, without an incident to break the peace. Your pleasure is still my rule. I keep the custom of going about on horseback and in armor. Once only—at His Majesty's dinner—I appeared in a Venetian suit—a red mantle and hose, one leg black, the other yellow— red–feathered cap, shoes with the long points chained to my knees. Was there not danger of being mistaken for a strutting bird of show? If my hand is cunning with weapons, should not the Greeks be taught it? How better recommend myself to His Majesty of Blacherne? Then, what an opportunity to rid my Lord of future annoyance! Old Orchan cannot live much longer, while this cheeping chicken is young… The son of the pretender, being told I was an Italian, replied he would try a tourney with me; if I proved worthy, he would consider the combat… Yesterday was the time for the meeting. There was a multitude out as witnesses, the Emperor amongst others. He did not resort to the *Kathisma*, but kept his saddle, with a bodyguard of horsemen at his back. His mount was my gray Arab… We began with volting, demi–volting, jumping, wheeling in retreat, throwing the horse. Orchan was a fumbler… We took to bows next, twelve arrows each. At full speed he put two bolts in the target, and I twelve, all in the white ring… Then spear against cimeter. I offered him choice, and he took the spear. In the first career, the blunted head of his weapon fell to the ground shorn off close behind the ferrule. The spectators cheered and laughed, and growing angry, Orchan shouted it was an accident, and challenged me to combat. I accepted, but His Majesty interposed—we might conclude with the spear and sword in

tourney again… My antagonist, charged with malicious intent, resolved to kill me. I avoided his shaft, and as his horse bolted past on my left, I pushed him with my shield, and knocked him from the saddle. They picked him up bleeding nose and ears. His Majesty invited me to accompany him to Blacherne… I left the Hippodrome sorry not to have been permitted to fight the vain fool; yet my repute in Constantinople is now undoubtedly good—I am a soldier to be cultivated."

Again:

"His Majesty has placed me formally in charge of the gate in front of my quarters. Communication with my Lord is now at all times easy. *The keys of the city are in effect mine.* Nevertheless I shall continue to patronize Ali. His fish are the freshest brought to market."

Again:

"O my Lord, the Princess Irene is well and keeps the morning colors in her cheeks for you. Yet I found her quite distraught. There was unwelcome news at the Palace from His Majesty's ambassador at Adrianople. The Sultan had at last answered the demand for increase of the Orchan stipend—not only was the increase refused, but the stipend itself was withdrawn, and a peremptory order to that effect sent to the province whence the fund has been all along collected… I made a calculation, with conclusion that my report of the tourney with young Orchan reached my Lord's hand, and I now am patting myself on the back, happy to believe it had something to do with my Lord's decision. The imposition deserved to have its head blown off. Orchan is a dotard. His son's ears are still impaired. In the fall the ground caught him crown first. He will never ride again. The pretension is over… I rode from the Princess' house directly to Blacherne. The Grand Council was in session: yet the Prefect of the Palace admitted me… O my Lord, this Constantine is a man, a warrior, an Emperor, surrounded by old women afraid of their shadows. The subject of discussion when I went in was the news from Adrianople. His Majesty was of opinion that your decision, coupled with the order discontinuing the stipend, was sign of a hostile intent. He was in favor of preparing for war. Phranza thought diplomacy not yet spent. Notaras asked what preparations

His Majesty had in mind. His Majesty replied, buying cannon and powder, stocking the magazines with provisions for a siege, increasing the navy, repairing the walls, clearing out the moat. He would also send an embassy to the Bishop of Rome, and through him appeal to the Christian powers of Europe for assistance in men and money. Notaras rejoined instantly: 'Rather than a Papal Legate in Constantinople, he would prefer a turbaned Turk.' The Council broke up in confusion… Verily, O my Lord, I pitied the Emperor. So much courage, so much weakness! His capital and the slender remnant of his empire are lost unless the *Gabours* of Venice and Italy come to his aid. Will they? The Holy Father, using the opportunity, will try once more to bring the Eastern Church to its knees, and failing, will leave it to its fate. If my Lord knocked at these gates to–morrow, Notaras would open one of them, and I another… Yet the Emperor will fight. He has the soul of a hero."

Again:

"The Princess Irene is inconsolable. Intensely Greek, and patriotic, and not a little versed in politics, she sees nothing cheering in the situation of the Empire. The vigils of night in her oratory are leaving their traces on her face. Her eyes are worn with weeping. I find it impossible not to sympathize with so much beauty tempered by so many virtues. When the worst has befallen, perhaps my Lord will know how to comfort her."

Finally:

"It is a week since I last wrote my Lord. Ali has been sick but keeps in good humor, and says he will be well when Christian winds cease blowing from Constantinople. He prays you to come and stop them… The diplomatic mishaps of the Emperor have quickened the religious feuds of his subjects. The Latins everywhere quote the speech of Notaras in the Council: 'Rather than a Papal Legate in Constantinople, I prefer a turbaned Turk'—and denounce it as treason to God and the State. It certainly represents the true feeling of the Greek clergy; yet they are chary in defending the Duke… The Princess is somewhat recovered, although perceptibly paler than is her wont. She is longing for the return of spring, and promises herself health and happiness in the palace at Therapia… To–

morrow, she informs me, there is to be a special grand service in Sancta Sophia. The Brotherhoods here and elsewhere will be present. I will be there also. She hopes peace and rest from doctrinal disputes will follow. We will see."

The extracts above given will help the reader to an idea of life in Constantinople; more especially they portray the peculiar service rendered by Corti during the months they cover.

There are two points in them deserving special notice: The warmth of description indulged with respect to the Princess Irene and the betrayal of the Emperor. It must not be supposed the Count was unaware of his perfidy. He did his writing after night, when the city and his own household were asleep; and the time was chosen, not merely for greater security from discovery, but that no eye might see the remorse he suffered. How often he broke off in the composition to pray for strength to rescue his honor, and save himself from the inflictions of conscience! There were caverns in the mountains and islands off in the mid–seas: why not fly to them? Alas! He was now in a bondage which made him weak as water. It was possible to desert Mahommed, but not the Princess. The dangers thickening around the city were to her as well. Telling her of them were useless; she would never abandon the old Capital; and it was the perpetually recurring comparison of her strength with his own weakness which wrought him his sharpest pangs. Writing of her in poetic strain was easy, for he loved her above every earthly consideration: but when he thought of the intent with which he wrote—that he was serving the love of another, and basely scheming to deliver her to him—there was no refuge in flight; recollection would go with him to the ends of the earth—better death. Not yet—not yet—he would argue. Heaven might send him a happy chance. So the weeks melted into months, and he kept the weary way hoping against reason, conspiring, betraying, demoralizing, sinking into despair.

CHAPTER VIII

OUR LORD'S CREED

Proceeding now to the special service mentioned in the extract from the last report of Count Corti to Mahommed.

The nave of Sancta Sophia was in possession of a multitude composed of all the Brotherhoods of the city, interspersed with visiting delegations from the monasteries of the Islands and many of the hermitic colonies settled in the mountains along the Asiatic shore of the Marmora. In the galleries were many women; amongst them, on the right–hand side, the Princess Irene. Her chair rested on a carpeted box a little removed from the immense pilaster, and raised thus nearly to a level with the top of the balustrade directly before her, she could easily overlook the floor below, including the apse. From her position everybody appeared dwarfed; yet she could see each figure quite well in the light of the forty arched windows above the galleries.

On the floor the chancel, or space devoted to the altar, was separated from the body of the nave by a railing of Corinthian brass, inside which, at the left, she beheld the Emperor, in Basilean regalia, seated on a throne—a very stately and imposing figure. Opposite him was the chair of the Patriarch. Between the altar and the railing arose a baldacchino, the canopy of white silk, the four supporting columns of shining silver. Under the canopy, suspended by a cord, hung the vessel of gold containing the Blessed Sacraments; and to the initiated it was a sufficient publication of the object of the assemblage.

Outside the railing, facing the altar, stood the multitude. To get an idea of its appearance, the reader has merely to remember the description of the bands marching into the garden of Blacherne the night of the *Pannychides*. There were the same gowns black and gray; the same tonsured heads, and heads shock–haired; the same hoods and glistening rosaries; the same

gloomy, bearded faces; the same banners, oriflammes, and ecclesiastical gonfalons, each with its community under it in a distinctive group. Back further towards the entrances from the vestibule was a promiscuous host of soldiers and civilians; having no part in the service, they were there as spectators.

The ceremony was under the personal conduct of the Patriarch. Silence being complete, the choir, invisible from the body of the nave, began its magnificent rendition of the *Sanctus*—"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth. Blessed is He who cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest"—and during the singing, His Serenity was clothed for the rite. Over his cassock, the deacons placed the surplice of white linen, and over that again a stole stiff with gold embroidery. He then walked slowly to the altar, and prayed; and when he had himself communicated, he was led to the baldacchino, where he blessed the Body and the Blood, and mixed them together in chalices, ready for delivery to the company of servers kneeling about him. The Emperor, who, in common with the communicants within and without the railing, had been on his knees, arose now and took position before the altar in a prayerful attitude; whereupon the Patriarch brought him a chalice on a small paten, and he put it to his lips, while the choir rang the dome with triumphal symphony.

His Serenity next returned to the baldacchino, and commenced giving the cups to the servers; at the same time the gate leading from the chancel to the nave was thrown open. Nor rustle of garment, nor stir of foot was heard.

Then a black–gowned figure arose amidst a group not far from the gate, and said, in a hoarse voice, muffled by the flaps of the hood covering his head and face:

"We are here, O Serenity, by thy invitation—here to partake of the Holy Eucharist—and I see thou art about sending it to us. Now not a few present believe there is no grace in leavened bread, and others hold it impiety to partake thereof. Wherefore tell us"—

The Patriarch looked once at the speaker; then, delivering the chalice, signed the servers to follow him; next instant, he stood in the open

gateway, and with raised hands, cried out:

"Holy things to the holy!"

Repeating the ancient formula, he stepped aside to allow the cup–bearers to pass into the nave; but they stood still, for there came a skurry of sound not possible of location, so did it at the same moment seem to be from the dome descending and from the floor going up to the dome. It was the multitude rising from their knees.

Now the Patriarch, though feeble in body, was stout of soul and ready–witted, as they usually are whose lives pass in combat and fierce debate. Regarding the risen audience calmly, he betook himself to his chair, and spoke to his assistants, who brought a plain chasuble, and put it on him, covering the golden stole completely. When he again appeared in the spaceway of the open gate, as he presently did, every cleric and every layman in the church to whom he was visible understood he took the interruption as a sacrilege from which he sought by the change of attire to save himself.

"Whoso disturbs the Sacrament in celebration has need of cause for that he does; for great is his offence whatever the cause."

The Patriarch's look and manner were void of provocation, except as one, himself rudely disposed, might discover it in the humility somewhat too studied.

"I heard my Brother—it would be an untruth to say I did not—and to go acquit of deceit, I will answer him, God helping me. Let me say first, while we have some differences in our faith, there are many things about which we are agreed, the things in agreement outnumbering those in difference; and of them not the least is the Real Presence once the Sacraments are consecrated. Take heed, O Brethren! Do any of you deny the Real Presence in the bread and wine of communion?"

No man made answer.

"It is as I said—not one. Look you, then, if I or you—if any of us be tempted to anger or passionate speech, and this house, long dedicated to the worship of God, and its traditions of holiness too numerous for

memory, and therefore of record only in the Books of Heaven, fail the restraints due them, lo, Christ is here—Christ in Real Presence—Christ our Lord in Body and Blood!"

The old man stood aside, pointing to the vessel under the baldacchino, and there were sighs and sobs. Some shouted: "Blessed be the Son of God!"

The sensation over, the Patriarch continued:

"O my Brother, take thou answer now. The bread is leavened. Is it therefore less grace–giving?"

"No, no!" But the response was drowned by an affirmative yell so strong there could be no doubt of the majority. The minority, however, was obstinate, and ere long the groups disrupted, and it seemed every man became a disputant. Now nothing serves anger like vain striving to be heard. The Patriarch in deep concern stood in the gateway, exclaiming: "Have a care, O Brethren, have a care! For now is Christ here!" And as the babble kept increasing, the Emperor came to him.

"They are like to carry it to blows, O Serenity."

"Fear not, my son, God is here, and He is separating the wheat from the chaff."

"But the blood shed will be on my conscience, and the *Panagia*"—

The aged Prelate was inflexible. "Nay, nay, not yet! They are Greeks. Let them have it out. The day is young; and how often is shame the miraculous parent of repentance."

Constantine returned to his throne, and remained there standing.

Meantime the tumult went on until, with shouting and gesticulating, and running about, it seemed the assemblage was getting mad with drink. Whether the contention was of one or many things, who may say? Well as could be ascertained, one party, taking cue from the Patriarch, denounced the interruption of the most sacred rite; the other anathematized the attempt to impose leavened bread upon orthodox communicants as a scheme of the devil and his arch–legate, the Bishop of Rome. Men of the same opinions argued blindly with each other; while genuine opposition

was conducted with glaring eyes, swollen veins, clinched hands, and voices high up in the leger lines of hate and defiance. The timorous and disinclined were caught and held forcibly. In a word, the scene was purely Byzantine, incredible of any other people.

The excitement afterwhile extended to the galleries, where, but that the women were almost universally of the Greek faction, the same passion would have prevailed; as it was, the gentle creatures screamed *azymite, azymite* in amazing disregard of the proprieties. The Princess Irene, at first pained and mortified, kept her seat until appearances became threatening; then she scanned the vast pit long and anxiously; finally her wandering eyes fell upon the tall figure of Sergius drawn out of the mass, but facing it from a position near the gate of the brazen railing. Immediately she settled back in her chair.

To justify the emotion now possessing her, the reader must return to the day the monk first presented himself at her palace near Therapia. He must read again the confession, extorted from her by the second perusal of Father Hilarion's letter, and be reminded of her education in the venerated Father's religious ideas, by which her whole soul was adherent to his conceptions of the Primitive Church of the Apostles. Nor less must the reader suffer himself to be reminded of the consequences to her—of the judgment of heresy upon her by both Latins and Greeks—of her disposition to protest against the very madness now enacting before her—of her longing, Oh, that I were a man!—of the fantasy that Heaven had sent Sergius to her with the voice, learning, zeal, courage, and passion of truth to enable her to challenge a hearing anywhere–of the persistence with which she had since cared for and defended him, and watched him in his studies, and shared them with him. Nor must the later incident, the giving him a copy of the creed she had formulated—the Creed of Nine Words—be omitted in the consideration.

Now indeed the reader can comprehend the Princess, and the emotions with which she beheld the scene at her feet. The Patriarch's dramatic warning of the Real Presence found in her a ready second; for keeping strictly to Father Hilarion's distinction between a right Creed and a form

or ceremony for pious observance, the former essential to salvation, the latter merely helpful to continence in the Creed, it was with her as if Christ in glorified person stood there under the baldacchino. What wonder if, from indignation at the madness of the assembly, the insensate howling, the blasphemous rage, she passed to exaltation of spirit, and fancied the time good for a reproclamation of the Primitive Church?

Suddenly a sharper, fiercer explosion of rage arose from the floor, and a rush ensued—the factions had come to blows!

Then the Patriarch yielded, and at a sign from the Emperor the choir sang the *Sanctus* anew. High and long sustained, the sublime anthem rolled above the battle and its brutalism. The thousands heard it, and halting, faced toward the apse, wondering what could be coming. It even reached into the vortex of combat, and turned all the unengaged there into peacemakers.

Another surprise still more effective succeeded. Boys with lighted candles, followed by bearers of smoking censers, bareheaded and in white, marched slowly from behind the altar toward the open gate, outside which they parted right and left, and stopped fronting the multitude. A broad banner hung to a cross–stick of gold, heavy with fringing of gold, the top of the staff overhung with fresh flowers in wreaths and garlands, the lower corners stayed by many streaming white ribbons in the hands of as many holy men in white woollen chasubles extending to the bare feet, appeared from the same retreat, carried by two brethren known to every one as janitors of the sacred chapel on the hill–front of Blacherne.

The Emperor, the Patriarch, the servers of the chalices, the whole body of assistants inside the railing, fell upon their knees while the banner was borne through the gate, and planted on the floor there. Its face was frayed and dim with age, yet the figure of the woman upon it was plain to sight, except as the faint gray smoke from the censers veiled it in a vanishing cloud.

Then there was an outburst of many voices:

"The *Panagia!* The *Panagia!*"

The feeling this time was reactionary.

"O Blessed Madonna!—Guardian of Constantinople!—Mother of God!—Christ is here!—Hosannas to the Son and to the Immaculate Mother!" With these, and other like exclamations, the mass precipitated itself forward, and, crowding near the historic symbol, flung themselves on the floor before it, grovelling and contrite, if not conquered.

The movement of the candle and censer bearers outside the gate forced Sergius nearer it; so when the *Panagia* was brought to a rest, he, being much taller than its guardians, became an object of general observation, and wishing to escape it if possible, he took off his high hat; whereupon his hair, parted in the middle, dropped down his neck and back fair and shining in the down–beating light.

This drew attention the more. Did any of the prostrate raise their eyes to the Madonna on the banner, they must needs turn to him next; and presently the superstitious souls, in the mood for miracles, began whispering to each other:

"See—it is the Son—it is the Lord himself!"

And of a truth the likeness was startling; although in saying this, the reader must remember the difference heretofore remarked between the Greek and Latin ideals.

About that time Sergius looked up to the Princess, whose face shone out of the shadows of the gallery with a positive radiance, and he was electrified seeing her rise from her chair, and wave a hand to him.

He understood her. The hour long talked of, long prepared for, was at last come—the hour of speech. The blood surged to his heart, leaving him pallid as a dead man. He stooped lower, covered his eyes with his hands, and prayed the wordless prayer of one who hastily commits himself to God; and in the darkness behind his hands there was an illumination, and in the midst of it a sentence in letters each a lambent flame—the Creed of Father Hilarion and the Princess Irene—our Lord's Creed:

"I BELIEVE IN GOD, AND JESUS CHRIST, HIS SON."

This was his theme!

With no thought of self, no consciousness but of duty to be done, trusting in God, he stood up, pushed gently through the kneeling boys and guardians of the *Panagia*, and took position where all eyes could look at the Blessed Mother slightly above him, and then to himself, in such seeming the very Son. It might have been awe, it might have been astonishment, it might have been presentiment; at all events, the moaning, sobbing, praying, tossing of arms, beating of breasts, with the other outward signs of remorse, grief and contrition grotesque and pitiful alike subsided, and the Church, apse, nave and gallery, grew silent—as if a wave had rushed in, and washed the life out of it.

"Men and brethren," he began, "I know not whence this courage to do comes, unless it be from Heaven, nor at whose word I speak, if not that Jesus of Nazareth, worker of miracles which God did by him anciently, yet now here in Real Presence of Body and Blood, hearing what we say, seeing what we do."

"Art thou not He?" asked a hermit, half risen in front of him, his wrap of undressed goatskin fallen away from his naked shoulders.

"No; his servant only am I, even as thou art—his servant who would not have forsaken him at Gethsemane, who would have given him drink on the Cross, who would have watched at the door of his tomb until laid to sleep by the Delivering Angel—his servant not afraid of Death, which, being also his servant, will not pass me by for the work I now do, if the work be not by his word."

The voice in this delivery was tremulous, and the manner so humble as to take from the answer every trace of boastfulness. His face, when he raised it, and looked out over the audience, was beautiful. The spectacle offered him in return was thousands of people on their knees, gazing at him undetermined whether to resent an intrusion or welcome a messenger with glad tidings.

"Men and brethren," he continued, more firmly, casting the old Scriptural address to the farthest auditor, "now are you in the anguish of remorse; but who told you that you had offended to such a degree? See you not the Spirit, sometimes called the Comforter, in you? Be at ease, for unto

us are repentance and pardon. There were who beat our dear Lord, and spit upon him, and tore his beard; who laid him on a cross, and nailed him to it with nails in his hands and feet; one wounded him in the side with a spear; yet what did he, the Holy One and the Just? Oh! if he forgave them glorying in their offences, will he be less merciful to us repentant?"

Raising his head a little higher, the preacher proceeded, with increased assurance:

"Let me speak freely unto you; for how can a man repent wholly, if the cause of his sin be not laid bare that he may see and hate it?"

"Now before our dear Lord departed out of the world, he left sayings, simple even to children, instructing such as would be saved unto everlasting life what they must do to be saved. Those sayings I call our Lord's Creed, by him delivered unto his disciples, from whom we have them: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life.' So we have the First Article—belief in God. Again: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life.' Behold the Second Article—belief in Christ."

"Now, for that the Son, and he who sent him, are at least in purpose one, belief in either of them is declared sufficient; nevertheless it may be simpler, if not safer, for us to cast the Two Articles together in a single phrase; we have then a Creed which we may affirm was made and left behind him by our Lord himself:"

I BELIEVE IN GOD, AND JESUS CHRIST, HIS SON.

And when we sound it, lo! two conditions in all; and he who embraces them, more is not required of him; he is already passed from death unto life—everlasting life.

"This, brethren, is the citadel of our Christian faith; wherefore, to strengthen it. What was the mission of Jesus Christ our Lord to the world? Hear every one! What was the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ? Why was he sent of God, and born into the world? Hearing the question, take heed of the answer: He was sent of God for the salvation of men. You have ears, hear; minds, think; nor shall one of you, the richest in understanding of the

Scriptures, in walk nearest the Sinless Example, ever find another mission for him which is not an arraignment of the love of his Father."

"Then, if it be true, as we all say, not one denying it, that our Lord brought to his mission the perfected wisdom of his Father, how could he have departed from the world leaving the way of salvation unmarked and unlighted? Or, sent expressly to show us the way, himself the appointed guide, what welcome can we suppose he would have had from his Father in Heaven, if he had given the duty over to the angels? Or, knowing the deceitfulness of the human heart, and its weakness and liability to temptation, whence the necessity for his coming to us, what if he had given the duty over to men, so much lower than the angels, and then gone away? Rather than such a thought of him, let us believe, if the way had been along the land, he would have planted it with inscribed hills; if over the seas, he would have sown the seas with pillars of direction above the waves; if through the air, he would have made it a path effulgent with suns numerous as the stars. 'I am the Way,' he said—meaning the way lies through me; and you may come to me in the place I go to prepare for you, if only you believe in God and me. Men and brethren, our Lord was true to his mission, and wise in the wisdom of his Father."

At this the hermit in front of the preacher, uttering a shill cry, spread his arms abroad, and quivered from head to foot. Many of those near sprang forward to catch him.

"No, leave him alone," cried Sergius, "leave him alone. The cross he took was heavy of itself; but upon the cross you heaped conditions without sanction, making a burden of which he was like to die. At last he sees how easy it is to go to his Master; that he has only to believe in God and the Master. Leave him with the truth; it was sent to save, not to kill."

The excitement over, Sergius resumed:

"I come now, brethren, to the cause of your affliction. I will show it to you; that is to say, I will show you why you are divided amongst yourselves, and resort to cruelty one unto another; as if murder would help either side of the quarrel. I will show your disputes do not come from

anything said or done by our Lord, whose almost last prayer was that all who believed in him might be made perfect in one."

"It is well known to you that our Lord did not found a Church during his life on earth, but gave authority for it to his Apostles. It is known to you also that what his Apostles founded was but a community: for such is the description: 'And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.'**[46]** And again: 'And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.' 'Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.'**[47]** But in time this community became known as the Church; and there was nothing of it except our Lord's Creed, in definition of the Faith, and two ordinances for the Church—Baptism for the remission of sins, that the baptized might receive the Comforter, and the Sacraments, that believers, often as they partook of the Body and Blood of Christ, might be reminded of him."

"Lo, now! In the space of three generations this Church, based upon this simple Creed, became a power from Alexandria to Lodinum; and though kings banded to tread it out; though day and night the smell of the blood of the righteous spilt by them was an offence to God; though there was no ingenuity more amongst men except to devise methods for the torture of the steadfast—still the Church grew; and if you dig deep enough for the reasons of its triumphant resistance, these are they: there was Divine Life in the Creed, and the Community was perfect in one; insomuch that the brethren quarrelled not among themselves; neither was there jealousy, envy or rivalry among them; neither did they dispute about immaterial things, such as which was the right mode of baptism, or whether the bread should be leavened or unleavened, or whence the Holy Ghost proceeded, whether from the Father or from the Father and Son together; neither did the elders preach for a price, nor forsake a poor flock for a rich one that

their salaries might be increased, nor engage in building costly tabernacles for the sweets of vanity in tall spires; neither did any study the Scriptures seeking a text, or a form, or an observance, on which to go out and draw from the life of the old Community that they might set up a new one; and in their houses of God there were never places for the men and yet other separate places for the women of the congregation; neither did a supplicant for the mercy of God look first at the garments of the neighbor next him lest the mercy might lose a virtue because of a patch or a tatter. The Creed was too plain for quibble or dispute; and there was no ambition in the Church except who should best glorify Christ by living most obedient to his commands. Thence came the perfection of unity in faith and works; and all went well with the Primitive Church of the Apostles; and the Creed was like unto the white horse seen by the seer of the final visions, and the Church was like him who sat upon the horse, with a bow in his hand, unto whom a crown was given; and he went forth conquering and to conquer."

Here the audience was stirred uncontrollably; many fell forward upon their faces; others wept, and the nave resounded with rejoicing. In one quarter alone there was a hasty drawing together of men with frowning brows, and that was where the gonfalon of the Brotherhood of the St. James' was planted. The Hegumen, in the midst of the group, talked excitedly, though in a low tone.

"I will not ask, brethren," Sergius said, in continuance, "if this account of the Primitive Church be true; you all do know it true; yet I will ask if one of you holds that the offending of which you would repent—the anger, and bitter words, and the blows—was moved by anything in our Lord's Creed, let him arise, before the Presence is withdrawn, and say that he thinks. These, lending their ears, will hear him, and so will God. What, will not one arise?"

"It is not necessary that I remind you to what your silence commits you. Rather suffer me to ask next, which of you will arise and declare, our Lord his witness, that the Church of his present adherence is the same Church the Apostles founded? You have minds, think; tongues, speak."

There was not so much as a rustle on the floor.

"It was well, brethren, that you kept silence; for, if one had said his Church was the same Church the Apostles founded, how could he have absolved himself of the fact that there are nowhere two parties each claiming to be of the only true Church? Or did he assert both claimants to be of the same Church, and it the only true one, then why the refusal to partake of the Sacraments? Why a division amongst them at all? Have you not heard the aforetime saying, 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation'?"

"Men and brethren, let no man go hence thinking his Church, whichever it be, is the Church of the Apostles. If he look for the community which was the law of the old brotherhood, his search will be vain. If he look for the unity, offspring of our Lord's last prayer, lo! jealousies, hates, revilements, blows instead. No, your Creed is of men, not Christ, and the semblance of Christ in it is a delusion and a snare." At this the gonfalon of the St. James' was suddenly lifted up, and borne forward to within a few feet of the gate, and the Hegumen, standing in front of it, cried out:

"Serenity, the preacher is a heretic! I denounce"—

He could get no further; the multitude sprang to foot howling. The Princess Irene, and the women in the galleries, also arose, she pale and trembling. Peril to Sergius had not occurred to her when she gave him the signal to speak. The calmness and resignation with which he looked at his accuser reminded her of his Master before Pilate, and taking seat again, she prayed for him, and the cause he was pleading.

At length, the Patriarch, waving his hand, said:

"Brethren, it may be Sergius, to whom we have been listening, has his impulse of speech from the Spirit, even as he has declared. Let us be patient and hear him."

Turning to Sergius, he bade him proceed.

"The three hundred Bishops and Presbyters from whom you have your Creeds,**[48]** O men and brethren"—so the preacher continued—"took the Two Articles from our Lord's Creed, and then they added others. Thus,

which of you can find a text of our Lord treating of his procession from the substance of God? Again, in what passage has our Lord required belief in the personage of the Holy Ghost as an article of faith essential to salvation?**[49]** 'I am the Way,' said our Lord. 'No,' say the three hundred, 'we are the way; and would you be saved, you must believe in us not less than in God and his Son.'"

The auditors a moment before so fierce, even the Hegumen, gazed at the preacher in a kind of awe; and there was no lessening of effect when his manner underwent a change, his head slightly drooping and his voice plaintive.

"The Spirit by whose support and urgency I have dared address you, brethren, admonishes me that my task is nearly finished."

He took hold of the corner of the *Panagia;* so all in view were more than ever impressed with his likeness to their ideal of the Blessed Master.

"The urgency seemed to me on account of your offence to the Real Presence so graciously in our midst; for truly when we are in the depths of penitence it is our nature to listen more kindly to what is imparted for our good; wherefore, as you have minds, I beg you to think. If our Lord did indeed leave a Creed containing the all in all for our salvation, what meant he if not that it should stand in saving purity until he came again in the glory of his going? And if he so intended, and yet uninspired men have added other Articles to the simple faith he asked of us, making it so much the harder for us to go to him in the place he has prepared for us, are they not usurpers? And are not the Articles which they have imposed to be passed by us as stratagems dangerous to our souls?"

"Again. The excellence of our Lord's Creed by which it may be always known when in question, its wisdom superior to the devices of men, is that it permits us to differ about matters outside of the faith without weakening our relations to the Blessed Master or imperilling our lot in his promises. Such matters, for example, as works, which are but evidences of faith and forms of worship, and the administration of the two ordinances of the Church, and God and his origin, and whether Heaven be here or there, or like unto this or that. For truly our Lord knew us, and that it was our nature

to deal in subtleties and speculate of things not intended we should know during this life; the thought of our minds being restless and always running, like the waters of a river on their way to the sea."

"Again, brethren. If the Church of the Apostles brought peace to its members, so that they dwelt together, no one of them lacking or in need, do not your experiences of to–day teach you wherein your Churches, being those built upon the Creed of the three hundred Bishops, are unlike it? Moreover, see you not if now you have several Churches, some amongst you, the carping and ambitious, will go out and in turn set up new Confessions of Faith, and at length so fill the earth with rival Churches that religion will become a burden to the poor and a byword with fools who delight in saying there is no God? In a village, how much better one House of God, with one elder for its service, and always open, than five or ten, each with a preacher for a price, and closed from Sabbath to Sabbath? For that there must be discipline to keep the faithful together, and to carry on the holy war against sin and its strongholds and captains, how much better one Church in the strength of unity than a hundred diversely named and divided against themselves?"

"The Revelator, even that John who while in the Spirit was bidden. 'Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter,' wrote, and at the end of his book set a warning: 'If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.' I cannot see, brethren, wherein that crime is greater than the addition of Articles to our Lord's Creed; nor do I know any who have more reason to be afraid of those threatened plagues than the priest or preacher who from pride or ambition, or dread of losing his place or living, shall wilfully stand in the way of a return to the Church of the Apostles and its unity. Forasmuch as I also know what penitential life is, and how your minds engage themselves in the solitude of your cells, I give you whereof to think. Men and brethren, peace unto you all!"

The hermit knelt to the preacher, and kissed his hand, sobbing the while; the auditors stared at each other doubtfully; but the Hegumen's time was

come. Advancing to the gate, he said:

"This man, O Serenity, is ours by right of fraternity. In thy hearing he hath defamed the Creed which is the rock the Fathers chose for the foundation of our most holy Church. He hath even essayed to make a Creed of his own, and present it for our acceptance—thy acceptance, O Serenity, and that of His Majesty, the only Christian Emperor, as well as ours. And for those things, and because never before in the history of our ancient and most notable Brotherhood hath there been an instance of heresy so much as in thought, we demand the custody of this apostate for trial and judgment. Give him to us to do with."

The Patriarch clasped his hands, and, shaking like a man struck with palsy, turned his eyes upward as if asking counsel of Heaven. His doubt and hesitation were obvious; and neighbor heard his neighbor's heart beat; so did silence once more possess itself of the great auditorium. The Princess Irene arose white with fear, and strove to catch the Emperor's attention; but he, too, was in the bonds waiting on the Patriarch.

Then from his place behind the Hegumen, Sergius spoke:

"Let not your heart be troubled, O Serenity. Give me to my Brotherhood. If I am wrong, I deserve to die; but if I have spoken as the Spirit directed me, God is powerful to save. I am not afraid of the trial."

The Patriarch gazed at him, his withered cheeks glistening with tears; still he hesitated.

"Suffer me, O Serenity!"—thus Sergius again—"I would that thy conscience may never be disquieted on my account; and now I ask not that thou give me to my Brotherhood—I will go with them freely and of my own accord." Speaking then to the Hegumen, he said: "No more, I pray. See, I am ready to be taken as thou wilt."

The Hegumen gave him in charge of the brethren; and at his signal, the gonfalon was raised and carried through the concourse, and out of one of the doors, followed closely by the Brotherhood.

At the moment of starting, Sergius lifted his hands, and shouted so as to be heard above the confusion: "Bear witness, O Serenity—and thou, O

Emperor! That no man may judge me an apostate, hear my confession: I believe in God, and Jesus Christ, his Son."

Many of those present remained and partook of the Sacraments; far the greater number hurried away, and it was not long until the house was vacated.

CHAPTER IX

COUNT CORTI TO MAHOMMED

Extract:

"God is God, and Mahomet is his Prophet! May they keep my Lord in health, and help him to all his heart's desires!… It is now three days since my eyes were gladdened by the presence of the Princess Irene; yet I have been duteously regular in my calls at her house. To my inquiries, her domestic has returned the same answer: 'The Princess is in her chapel praying. She is sadly disturbed in mind, and excuses herself to every one.' Knowing this information will excite my Lord's apprehension, I beg him to accept the explanation of her ailments which I think most probable… My Lord will gratify me by graciously referring to the account of the special meeting in Sancta Sophia which I had the honor to forward the evening of the day of its occurrence. The conjecture there advanced that the celebration of the Sacrament in highest form was a stratagem of the Patriarch's looking to a reconciliation of the factions, has been confirmed; and more—it has proved a failure. Its effect has inflamed the fanaticism of the Greek party as never before. Notaras, moved doubtless by Gennadius, induced them to suspect His Majesty and the Patriarch of conniving at the wonderful sermon of the monk Sergius; and, as the best rebuke in their power, the Brotherhood of the St. James' erected a Tribunal of Judgment in their monastery last night, and placed the preacher on trial. He defended himself, and drove them to admit his points; that their Church is not the Primitive Church of the Apostles, and that their Creed is an unwarranted enlargement of the two Articles of Faith left by Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world. Yet they pronounced him an apostate and a heretic of incendiary purpose, and condemned him to the old lion in the Cynegion, Tamerlane, famous these many years as a man–eater… My Lord should also know of the rumor in the city which attributes the Creed of Nine

Words—'I believe in God, and Jesus Christ, his Son'—to the Princess Irene; and her action would seem to justify the story. Directly the meeting in Sancta Sophia was over, she hastened to the Palace, and entreated His Majesty to save the monk from his brethren. My Lord may well think the Emperor disposed to grant her prayer; his feeling for her is warmer than friendship. The gossips say he at one time proposed marriage to her. At all events, being a tender–hearted man—too tender indeed for his high position—it is easy imagining how such unparalleled beauty in tearful distress must have moved him. Unhappily the political situation holds him as in a vice. The Church is almost solidly against him; while of the Brotherhoods this one of the St. James' has been his only stanch adherent. What shall the poor man do? If he saves the preacher, he is himself lost. It appears now she has been brought to understand he cannot interfere. Thrown thus upon the mercy of Heaven, she has buried herself in her oratory. Oh, the full Moon of full Moons! And alas! that she should ever be overcast by a cloud, though it be not heavier than the just–risen morning mist. My Lord—or Allah must come quickly!"

* * * * *

"O my Lord! In duty again and always!… Ali did not come yesterday. I suppose the high winds were too unfriendly. So the despatch of that date remained on my hands; and I now open it, and include a supplement… This morning as usual I rode to the Princess' door. The servant gave me the same report—his mistress was not receiving. It befalls therefore that my Lord must take refuge in his work or in dreams of her—and may I lay a suggestion at his feet, I advise the latter, for truly, if the world is a garden, she is its Queen of Roses… For the sake of the love my Lord bears the Princess, and the love I bear my Lord, I did not sleep last night, being haunted with thinking how I could be of service to her. What is the use of strength and skill in arms if I cannot turn them to account in her behalf as my Lord would have me?… On my way to the Princess', I was told that the monk, who is the occasion of her sorrow, his sentence being on her conscience, is to be turned in with the lion to–morrow. As I rode away from her house in desperate strait, not having it in power to tell my Lord anything of her, it occurred to me to go see the Cynegion, where the

judgment is to be publicly executed. What if the Most Merciful should offer me an opportunity to do the unhappy Princess something helpful? If I shrank from the lion, when killing it would save her a grief, my Lord would never forgive me… Here is a description of the Cynegion: The northwest wall of the city drops from the height of Blacherne into a valley next the harbor or Golden Horn, near which it meets the wall coming from the east. Right in the angle formed by the intersection of the walls there is a gate, low, very strong, and always closely guarded. Passing the gate, I found myself in an enclosed field, the city wall on the east, wooded hills south, and the harbor north. How far the enclosure extends up the shore of the harbor, I cannot say exactly—possibly a half or three quarters of a mile. The surface is level and grassy. Roads wind in and out of clumps of selected shrubbery, with here and there an oak tree. Kiosk–looking houses, generally red painted, are frequent, some with roofs, some without. Upon examination I discovered the houses were for the keeping of animals and birds. In one there was an exhibition of fish and reptiles. But much the largest structure, called the Gallery, is situated nearly in the centre of the enclosure; and it astonished me with an interior in general arrangement like a Greek theatre, except it is entirely circular and without a stage division. There is an arena, like a sanded floor, apparently fifty paces in diameter, bounded by a brick wall eighteen or twenty feet in height, and from the top of the wall seats rise one above another for the accommodation of common people; while for the Emperor I noticed a covered stand over on the eastern side. The wall of the arena is broken at regular intervals by doors heavily barred, leading into chambers anciently dens for ferocious animals, but at present prisons for criminals of desperate character. There are also a number of gates, one under the grand stand, the others forming northern, southern and eastern entrances. From this, I am sure my Lord can, if he cares to, draught the Cynegion, literally the Menagerie, comprehending the whole enclosure, and the arena in the middle of it, where the monk will to–morrow expiate his heresy. Formerly combats in the nature of wagers of battle were appointed for the place, and beasts were pitted against each other; but now the only bloody amusement permitted in it is when a criminal or an offender against God is given to

the lion. On such occasions, they tell me, the open seats and grand stands are crowded to their utmost capacities… If the description is tedious, I hope my Lord's pardon, for besides wishing to give him an idea of the scene of the execution to–morrow, I thought to serve him in the day he is looking forward to with so much interest, when the locality will have to be considered with a view to military approach. In furtherance of the latter object, I beg to put my Lord in possession of the accompanying diagram of the Cynegion, observing particularly its relation to the city; by attaching it to the drawings heretofore sent him, he will be enabled to make a complete map of the country adjacent to the landward wall… Ali has just come in. As I supposed, he was detained by the high winds. His mullets are perfection. With them he brings a young sword–fish yet alive. I look at the mess, and grieve that I cannot send a portion to my Lord for his breakfast. However, a few days now, and he will come to his own; the sea with its fish, and the land and all that belongs to it. The child of destiny can afford to wait."

CHAPTER X

SERGIUS TO THE LION

About ten o'clock the day after the date of Count Corti's last despatch—ten of the morning—a woman appeared on the landing in front of Port St. Peter, and applied to a boatman for passage to the Cynegion.

She was thickly veiled, and wore an every–day overcloak of brown stuff closely buttoned from her throat down. Her hands were gloved, and her feet coarsely shod. In a word, her appearance was that of a female of the middle class, poor but respectable.

The landing was thronged at the time. It seemed everybody wanted to get to the menagerie at once. Boatmen were not lacking. Their craft, of all known models, lay in solid block yards out, waiting turns to get in; and while they waited, the lusty, half–naked fellows flirted their oars, quarrelled with each other in good nature, Greek–like, and yelled volleys at the slow bargain makers whose turns had arrived.

Twice the woman asked if she could have a seat.

"How many of you are there?" she was asked in reply.

"I am alone."

"You want the boat alone?"

"Yes."

"Well, that can't be. I have seats for several—and wife and four babies at home told me to make the most I could out of them. It has been some time since one has tried to look old Tamerlane in the eye, thinking to scare him out of his dinner. The game used to be common; it's not so now."

"But I will pay you for all the seats."

"Full five?"

"Yes."

"In advance?"

"Yes."

"Jump in, then—and get out your money—fifty–five noumias—while I push through these howling water–dogs."

By the time the boat was clear of the pack, truly enough the passenger was with the fare in hand.

"Look," she said, "here is a bezant."

At sight of the gold piece, the man's countenance darkened, and he stopped rowing.

"I can't change that. You might as well have no money at all."

"Friend," she returned, "row me swiftly to the first gate of the Cynegion, and the piece is yours."

"By my blessed patron! I'll make you think you are on a bird, and that these oars are wings. Sit in the middle—that will do. Now!"

The fellow was stout, skilful, and in earnest. In a trice he was under headway, going at racing speed. The boats in the harbor were moving in two currents, one up, the other down; and it was noticeable those in the first were laden with passengers, those of the latter empty. Evidently the interest was at the further end of the line, and the day a holiday to the two cities, Byzantium and Galata. Yet of the attractions on the water and the shores, the woman took no heed; she said never a word after the start; but sat with head bowed, and her face buried in her hands. Occasionally, if the boatman had not been so intent on earning the gold piece, he might have heard her sob. For some reason, the day was not a holiday to her.

"We are nearly there," he at length said.

Without lifting the veil, she glanced at a low wall on the left–hand shore, then at a landing, shaky from age and neglect, in front of a gate in the wall; and seeing it densely blockaded, she spoke:

"Please put me ashore here. I have no time to lose."

The bank was soft and steep.

"You cannot make it."

"I can if you will give me your oar for a step."

"I will."

In a few minutes she was on land. Pausing then to toss the gold piece to the boatman, she heard his thanks, and started hastily for the gate. Within the Cynegion, she fell in with some persons walking rapidly, and talking of the coming event as if it were a comedy.

"He is a Russian, you say?"

"Yes, and what is strange, he is the very man who got the Prince of India's negro"—

"The giant?"

"Yes—who got him to drown that fine young fellow Demedes."

"Where is the negro now?"

"In a cell here."

"Why didn't they give him to the lion?"

"Oh, he had a friend—the Princess Irene."

"What is to be done with him?"

"Afterwhile, when the affair of the cistern is forgotten, he will be given a purse, and set free."

"Pity! For what sport to have seen him in front of the old Tartar!"

"Yes, he's a fighter." In the midst of this conversation, the party came in sight of the central building, externally a series of arches supporting a deep cornice handsomely balustraded, and called the Gallery.

"Here we are!—But see the people on the top! I was afraid we would be too late. Let us hurry."

"Which gate?"

"The western—it's the nearest."

"Can't we get in under the grand stand?"

"No, it's guarded."

These loquacious persons turned off to make the western gate; but the woman in brown kept on, and ere long was brought to the grand stand on

the north. An arched tunnel, amply wide, ran under it, with a gate at the further end admitting directly to the arena. A soldier of the foreign legion held the mouth of the tunnel.

"Good friend," she began, in a low, beseeching tone, "is the heretic who is to suffer here yet?"

"He was brought out last night."

"Poor man! I am a friend of his"—her voice trembled—"may I see him?"

"My orders are to admit no one—and I do not know which cell he is in."

The supplicant, sobbing and wringing her hands, stood awhile silent. Then a roar, very deep and hoarse, apparently from the arena, startled her and she trembled.

"Tamerlane!" said the soldier.

"O God!" she exclaimed. "Is the lion turned in already?"

"Not yet. He is in his den. They have not fed him for three days."

She stayed her agitation, and asked: "What are your orders?"

"Not to admit any one."

"To the cells?"

"The cells, and the arena also."

"Oh, I see! You can let me stand at the gate yonder?"

"Well—yes. But if you are the monk's friend, why do you want to see him die?"

She made no reply, but took from a pocket a bezant, and contrived to throw its yellow gleam in the sentinel's eyes.

"Is the gate locked?"

"No, it is barred on this side."

"Does it open into the arena?"

"Yes."

"I do not ask you to violate your orders," she continued, calmly; "only let me go to the gate, and see the man when he is brought out."

She offered him the money, and he took it, saying: "Very well. I can see no harm in that. Go."

The gate in question was open barred, and permitted a view of nearly the whole circular interior. The spectacle presented was so startling she caught one of the bars for support. Throwing back the veil, she looked, breathing sighs which were almost gasps. The arena was clear, and thickly strewn with wet sand. There were the walls shutting it in, like a pit, and on top of them, on the ascending seats back to the last one—was it a cloud she beheld? A second glance, and she recognized the body of spectators, men, women and children, compacted against the sky. How many of them there were! Thousands and thousands! She clasped her hands, and prayed.

Twelve o'clock was the hour for the expiation.

Waiting so wearily there at the gate—praying, sighing, weeping by turns—the woman was soon forgotten by the sentinel. She had bought his pity. In his eyes she was only a lover of the doomed monk. An hour passed thus. If the soldier's theory were correct, if she were indeed a poor love–lorn creature come to steal a last look at the unfortunate, she eked small comfort from her study of the cloud of humanity on the benches. Their jollity, their frequent laughter and hand–clapping reached her in her retreat. "Merciful God!" she kept crying. "Are these beings indeed in thy likeness?"

In a moment of wandering thought, she gave attention to the fastenings of the gate, and observed the ends of the bar across it rested in double iron sockets on the side toward her; to pass it, she had only to raise the bar clear of the socket and push.

Afterwhile the door of a chamber nearly opposite her opened, and a man stood in the aperture. He was very tall, gigantic even; and apparently surprised by what he beheld, he stepped out to look at the benches, whereat the light fell upon him and she saw he was black. His appearance called for a roar of groans, and he retired, closing the door behind him. Then there was an answering roar from a cell near by at her left. The occupants of the benches applauded long and merrily, crying, "Tamerlane! Tamerlane!" The woman shrank back terrified.

A little later another man entered the arena, from the western gate. Going to the centre he looked carefully around him; as if content with the inspection, he went next to a cell and knocked. Two persons responded by coming out of the door; one an armed guardsman, the other a monk. The latter wore a hat of clerical style, and a black gown dropping to his bare feet, its sleeves of immoderate length completely muffling his hands. Instantly the concourse on the benches arose. There was no shouting—one might have supposed them all suddenly seized with shuddering sympathy. But directly a word began passing from mouth to mouth; at first, it was scarcely more than a murmur; soon it was a byname on every tongue:

"The heretic! The heretic!"

The monk was Sergius.

His guard conducted him to the centre of the field, and, taking off his hat, left him there. In going he let his gauntlet fall. Sergius picked it up, and gave it to him; then calm, resigned, fearless, he turned to the east, rested his hands on his breast palm to palm, closed his eyes, and raised his face. He may have had a hope of rescue in reserve; certain it is, they who saw him, taller of his long gown, his hair on his shoulders and down his back, his head upturned, the sunlight a radiant imprint on his forehead, and wanting only a nimbus to be the Christ in apparition, ceased jeering him; it seemed to them that in a moment, without effort, he had withdrawn his thoughts from this world, and surrendered himself. They could see his lips move; but what they supposed his last prayer was only a quiet recitation: "I believe in God, and Jesus Christ, his Son."

The guard withdrawn, three sharp mots of a trumpet rang out from the stand. A door at the left of the tunnel gate was then slowly raised; whereupon a lion stalked out of the darkened depths, and stopped on the edge of the den thus exposed, winking to accustom his eyes to the day–splendor. He lingered there very leisurely, turning his ponderous head from right to left and up and down, like a prisoner questioning if he were indeed at liberty. Having viewed the sky and the benches, and filled his deep chest with ample draughts of fresh air, suddenly Tamerlane noticed the monk. The head rose higher, the ears erected, and, snuffing like a hound, he

fretted his shaggy mane; his yellow eyes changed to coals alive, and he growled and lashed his sides with his tail. A majestic figure was he now. "What is it?" he appeared asking himself. "Prey or combat?" Still in a maze, he stepped out into the arena, and shrinking close to the sand, inched forward creeping toward the object of his wonder.

The spectators had opportunity to measure him, and drink their fill of terror. The monk was a goodly specimen of manhood, young, tall, strong; but a fig for his chances once this enemy struck him or set its teeth in his flesh! An ox could not stand the momentum of that bulk of bone and brawn. It were vain telling how many—not all of them women and children—furtively studied the height of the wall enclosing the pit to make sure of their own safety upon the seats.

Sergius meantime remained in prayer and recitation; he was prepared for the attack, but as a non–resistant; if indeed he thought of battle, he was not merely unarmed—the sleeves of his gown deprived him of the use of his hands. From the man to the lion, from the lion to the man, the multitude turned shivering, unable nevertheless to look away.

Presently the lion stopped, whined, and behaved uneasily. Was he afraid? Such was the appearance when he began trotting around at the base of the wall, halting before the gates, and seeking an escape. Under the urgency, whatever it was, from the trot he broke into a gallop, without so much as a glance at the monk.

A murmur descended from the benches. It was the people recovering from their horror, and impatient. Ere long they became positive in expression; in dread doubtless of losing the catastrophe of the show, they yelled at the cowardly beast.

In the height of this tempest, the gate of the tunnel under the grand stand opened quickly, and was as quickly shut. Death brings no deeper hush than fell upon the assemblage then. A woman was crossing the sand toward the monk! Round sped the lion, forward she went! Two victims! Well worth the monster's hunger through the three days to be so banqueted on the fourth!

There are no laws of behavior for such situations. Impulse and instinct rush in and take possession. While the thousands held their breath, they were all quickened to know who the intruder was.

She was robed in white, was bareheaded and barefooted. The dress, the action, the seraphic face were not infrequent on the water, and especially in the churches; recognition was instantaneous, and through the eager crowded ranks the whisper flew:

"God o' Mercy! It is the Princess—the Princess Irene!"

Strong men covered their eyes, women fainted.

The grand stand had been given up to the St. James', and they and their intimates filled it from the top seat to the bottom; and now directly the identity became assured, toward them, or rather to the Hegumen conspicuous in their midst, innumerable arms were outstretched, seconding the cry: "Save her! Save her! Let the lion be killed!"

Easier said than done. Crediting the Brotherhood with lingering sparks of humanity, the game was beyond their interference. The brute was lord. Who dared go in and confront him?

About this time, the black man, of whom we have spoken, looked out of his cell again. To him the pleading arms were turned. He saw the monk, the Princess, and the lion making its furious circuit—saw them and retreated, but a moment after reappeared, attired in the savageries which were his delight. In the waist–belt he had a short sword, and over his left shoulder a roll like a fisherman's net. And now he did not retreat.

The Princess reached Sergius safely, and placing a hand on his arm, brought him back, as it were, to life and the situation.

"Fly, little mother—by the way you came—fly!" he cried, in mighty anguish. "O God! it is too late—too late."

Wringing his hands, he gave way to tears.

"No, I will not fly. Did I not bring you to this? Let death come to us both. Better the quick work of the lion than the slow torture of conscience. I will not fly! We will die together. I too believe in God and Jesus Christ his Son."

She reached up, and rested her hand upon his shoulder. The repetition of the Creed, and her companionship restored his courage, and smiling, despite the tears on his cheeks, he said:

"Very well, little mother. The army of the martyrs will receive us, and the dear Lord is at his mansion door to let us in."

The lion now ceased galloping. Stopping over in the west quarter of the field, he turned his big burning eyes on the two thus resigning themselves, and crouching, put himself in motion toward them; his mane all on end; his jaws agape, their white armature whiter of the crimson tongue lolling adrip below the lips. He had given up escape, and, his curiosity sated, was bent upon his prey. The charge of cowardice had been premature. The near thunder of his roaring was exultant and awful.

There was great ease of heart to the people when Nilo—for he it was—taking position between the devoted pair and their enemy, shook the net from his shoulder, and proceeded to give an example of his practice with lions in the jungles of Kash–Cush.

Keeping the brute steadily eye to eye, he managed so that while retaining the leaden balls tied to its disengaged corners one in each hand, the net was presently in an extended roll on the ground before him. Leaning forward then, his hands bent inwardly knuckle to knuckle at his breast, his right foot advanced, the left behind the right ready to carry him by a step left aside, he waited the attack—to the beholders, a figure in shining ebony, giantesque in proportions, Phidian in grace.

Tamerlane stopped. What new wonder was this? And while making the study, he settled flat on the sand, and sunk his roaring into uneasy whines and growls.

By this time every one looking on understood Nilo's intent—that he meant to bide the lion's leap, and catch and entangle him in the net. What nerve and nicety of calculation—what certainty of eye—what knowledge of the savage nature dealt with—what mastery of self, limb and soul were required for the feat!

Just at this crisis there was a tumult in the grand stand. Those who turned that way saw a man in glistening armor pushing through the

brethren there in most unceremonious sort. In haste to reach the front, he stepped from bench to bench, knocking the gowned Churchmen right and left as if they were but so many lay figures. On the edge of the wall, he tossed his sword and shield into the arena, and next instant leaped after them. Before astonishment was spent, before the dull of faculties could comprehend the intruder, before minds could be made up to so much as yell, he had fitted the shield to his arm, snatched up the sword, and run to the point of danger. There, with quick understanding of the negro's strategy, he took place behind him, but in front of the Princess and the monk. His agility, cumbered though he was, his amazing spirit, together with the thought that the fair woman had yet another champion over whom the lion must go ere reaching her, wrought the whole multitude into ecstasy. They sprang upon the benches, and their shouting was impossible of interpretation except as an indication of a complete revulsion of feeling. In fact, many who but a little before had cheered the lion or cursed him for cowardice now prayed aloud for his victims.

The noise was not without effect on the veteran Tamerlane. He surveyed the benches haughtily once, then set forward again, intent on Nilo.

The movement, in its sinuous, flexile gliding, resembled somewhat a serpent's crawl. And now he neither roared nor growled. The lolling tongue dragged the sand; the beating of the tail was like pounding with a flail; the mane all erect trebly enlarged the head; and the eyes were like live coals in a burning bush. The people hushed. Nilo stood firm; thunder could as easily have diverted a statue; and behind him, not less steadfast and watchful, Count Corti kept guard. Thirty feet away— twenty–five—twenty —then the great beast stopped, collected himself, and with an indescribable roar launched clear of the ground. Up, at the same instant, and forward on divergent lines, went the leaden balls; the netting they dragged after them had the appearance of yellow spray blown suddenly in the air. When the monster touched the sand again, he was completely enveloped.

The struggle which ensued—the gnashing of teeth, the bellowing, the rolling and blind tossing and pitching, the labor with the mighty limbs, the

snapping of the net, the burrowing into the sand, the further and more inextricable entanglement of the enraged brute may be left to imagination. Almost before the spectators realized the altered condition, Nilo was stabbing him with the short sword.

The well–directed steel at length accomplished the work, and the pride of the Cynegion lay still in the bloody tangle—then the benches found voice.

Amidst the uproar Count Corti went to Nilo.

"Who art thou?" he asked, in admiration.

The King smiled, and signified his inability to hear or speak. Whereupon the Count led him to the Princess.

"Take heart, fair saint," he said. "The lion is dead, and thou art safe."

She scarcely heard him.

He dropped upon his knee.

"The lion is dead, O Princess, and here is the hand which slew him—here thy rescuer."

She looked her gratitude to Nilo—speak she could not.

"And thou, too," the Count continued, to the monk, "must have thanks for him."

Sergius replied: "I give thee thanks, Nilo—and thou, noble Italian—I am only a little less obliged to thee—thou wast ready with thy sword."

He paused, glanced at the grand stand, and went on: "It is plain to me, Count Corti, that thou thinkest my trial happily ended. The beast is dead truly; but yonder are some not less thirsty for blood. It is for them to say what I must further endure. I am still the heretic they adjudged me. Do thou therefore banish me from thy generous mind; then thou canst give it entirely to her who is most in need of it. Remove the Princess—find a chair for her, and leave me to God."

"What further can they do?" asked the Count. "Heaven hath decided the trial in thy favor. Have they another lion?"

The propriety of the monk's suggestion was obvious; it was not becoming for the Princess to remain in the public eye; besides, under reaction of spirit, she was suffering.

"Have they another lion?" the Count repeated.

Anxious as he was to assist the Princess, he was not less anxious, if there was further combat, to take part in it. The Count was essentially a fighting man. The open door of Nilo's cell speedily attracted his attention.

"Help me, sir monk. Yonder is a refuge for the Princess. Let us place her in safety. I will return, and stay with thee. If the reverend Christians, thy brethren in the grand stand, are not content, by Allah"—he checked himself—"their cruelty would turn the stomach of a Mohammedan."

A few minutes, and she was comfortably housed in the cell.

"Now, go to thy place; I will send for a chair, and rejoin thee."

At the tunnel gate, the Count was met by a number of the St. James', and he forgot his errand.

"We have come," said one of them to Sergius, "to renew thy arrest."

"Be it so," Sergius replied; "lead on."

But Count Corti strode forward.

"By whose authority is this arrest renewed?" he demanded.

"Our Hegumen hath so ordered."

"It shall not be—no, by the Mother of your Christ, it shall not be unless you bring me the written word of His Majesty making it lawful."

"The Hegumen"—

"I have said it, and I carry a sword"—the Count struck the hilt of the weapon with his mailed hand, so the clang was heard on the benches. "I have said it, and my sword says it. Go, tell thy Hegumen."

Then Sergius spoke:

"I pray you interfere not. The Heavenly Father who saved me this once is powerful to save me often."

"Have done, sir monk," the Count returned, with increasing earnestness. "Did I not hear thee say the same in thy holy Sancta Sophia, in such wise

that these deserved to cast themselves at thy feet? Instead, lo! the lion there. And for the truth, which is the soul of the world as God is its Maker—the Truth and the Maker being the same—it is not interest in thee alone which moves me. She, thy patroness yonder, is my motive as well. There are who will say she followed thee hither being thy lover; but thou knowest better, and so do I. She came bidden by conscience, and except thou live, there will be no ease of conscience for her—never. Wherefore, sir monk, hold thy peace. Thou shalt no more go hence of thine own will than these shall take thee against it… Return, ye men of blood—return to him who sent you, and tell him my sword vouches my word, being so accustomed all these years I have been a man. Bring they the written word of His Majesty, I will give way. Let them send to him."

The brethren stared at the Count. Had he not been willing to meet old Tamerlane with that same sword? They turned about, and were near the tunnel gate going to report, when it was thrown open with great force, and the Emperor Constantine appeared on horseback, the horse bloody with spurring and necked with foam. Riding to the Count he drew rein.

"Sir Count, where is my kinswoman?"

Corti kissed his hand.

"She is safe, Your Majesty—she is in the cell yonder."

The Emperor's eye fell upon the carcass of the lion.

"Thou didst it, Count?"

"No—this man did it."

The Emperor gazed at Nilo, thus designated, and taking a golden chain of fine workmanship from his neck, he threw it over the black King's. At the door of the cell, he dismounted; within, he kissed the Princess on the forehead.

"A chair will be here directly."

"And Sergius?" she asked.

"The Brotherhood must forego their claim now. Heaven has signified its will."

He thereupon entered into explanation. The necessity upon him was sore and trying, else he had never surrendered Sergius to the Brotherhood. He expected the Hegumen would subject him to discipline—imprisonment or penance. He had even signed the order placing the lion at service, supposing they meant merely a trial of the monk's constancy. Withal the proceeding was so offensive he had refused to witness it. An officer came to the palace with intelligence which led him to believe the worst was really intended. To stop it summarily, he had ordered a horse and a guard. Another officer reported the Princess in the arena with Sergius and the lion. With that His Majesty had come at speed. And he was grateful to God for the issue.

In a short time the sedan was brought, and the Princess borne to her house.

Summoning the Brotherhood from the grand stand, the Emperor forbade their pursuing Sergius further; the punishment had already been too severe. The Hegumen protested. Constantine arose in genuine majesty, and denouncing all clerical usurpations, he declared that for the future he would be governed by his own judgment in whatever concerned the lives of his subjects and the welfare of his empire. The declaration was heard by the people on the benches.

By his order, Sergius was conducted to Blacherne, and next day installed a janitor of the imperial Chapel; thus ending his connection with the Brotherhood of the St. James'.

"Your Majesty," said Count Corti, at the conclusion of the scene in the arena, "I pray a favor."

Constantine, by this time apprised of the Count's gallantry, bade him speak.

"Give me the keeping of this negro."

"If you mean his release from prison, Sir Count, take him. He can have no more suitable guardian. But it is to be remembered he came to the city with one calling himself the Prince of India, and if at any time that mysterious person reappears, the man is to be given back to his master."

The Count regarded Nilo curiously—he was merely recalling the Prince.

"Your Majesty is most gracious. I accept the condition."

The captain of the guard, coming to the tunnel under the grand stand, was addressed by the sentinel there.

"See—here are a dress, a pair of shoes, and a veil. I found them by the gate there."

"How came they there?"

"A woman asked me to let her stand by the gate, and see the heretic when they brought him out, and I gave her permission. She wore these things."

"The Princess Irene!" exclaimed the officer. "Very well. Send them to me, and I will have her pleasure taken concerning them."

The Cynegion speedily returned to its customary state. But the expiation remained in the public mind a date to which all manner of events in city life was referred; none of them, however, of such consequence as the loss to the Emperor of the allegiance of the St. James'. Thenceforth the Brotherhoods were united against him.

BOOK VI

CONSTANTINE

CHAPTER I

THE SWORD OF SOLOMON

The current of our story takes us once more to the White Castle at the mouth of the Sweet Waters of Asia.

It is the twenty–fifth of March, 1452. The weather, for some days cloudy and tending to the tempestuous, changed at noon, permitting the sun to show himself in a field of spotless blue. At the edge of the mountainous steep above Roumeli Hissar, the day–giver lingered in his going down, as loath to leave the life concentrated in the famous narrows in front of the old Castle.

On the land, there was an army in waiting; therefore the city of tents and brushwood booths extending from the shore back to the hills, and the smoke pervading the perspective in every direction.

On the water, swinging to each other, crowding all the shallows of the delta of the little river, reaching out into the sweep of the Bosphorus, boats open and boats roofed—scows, barges, galleys oared and galleys with masts—ships—a vast conglomerate raft.

About the camp, and to and fro on the raft, men went and came, like ants in storing time. Two things, besides the locality, identified them—their turbans, and the crescent and star in the red field of the flags they displayed.

History, it would appear, takes pleasure in repetition. Full a thousand years before this, a greater army had encamped on the banks of the same Sweet Waters. Then it was of Persians; now it is of Turks; and curiously there are no soldiers to be seen, but only working men, while the flotilla is composed of carrying vessels; here boats laden with stone; there boats with lime; yonder boats piled high with timber.

At length the sun, drawing the last ravelling of light after it, disappeared. About that time, the sea gate in front of the Palace of Julian down at Constantinople opened, and a boat passed out into the Marmora. Five men plied the oars. Two sat near the stern. These latter were Count Corti and Ali, son of Abed–din the Faithful.

Two hours prior, Ali, with a fresh catch of fish, entered the gate, and finding no purchaser in the galley, pushed on to the landing, and thence to the Palace.

"O Emir," he said, when admitted to the Count, "the Light of the World, our Lord Mahommed is arrived."

The intelligence seemed to strike the Count with a sudden ague.

"Where is he?" he asked, his voice hollow as from a closed helmet. Ere the other could answer, he added a saving clause: "May the love of Allah be to him a staff of life!"

"He is at the White Castle with Mollahs, Pachas, and engineers a host… What a way they were in, rushing here and there, like squealing swine, and hunting quarters, if but a crib to lie in and blow! Shintan take them, beards, boots, and turbans! So have they lived on fat things, slept on divans of down under hangings of silk, breathed perfumed airs in crowded harems, Heaven knows if now they are even fit to stop an arrow. They thought the old Castle of Bajazet–Ilderim another Jehan–Numa. By the delights of Paradise, O Emir—ha, ha, ha!—it was good to see how little the Light of the World cared for them! At the Castle, he took in with him for household the ancient *Gabour* Ortachi–Khalil and a Prince of India, whom he calls his Messenger of the Stars; the rest were left to shift for themselves till their tents arrive. Halting the Incomparables,**[50]** out beyond Roumeli–Hissar, he summoned the Three Tails,**[51]** nearly dead from fatigue, having been in the saddle since morning, and rode off with them fast as his Arab could gallop across the country, and down the long hill behind Therapia, drawing rein at the gate before the Palace of the Princess Irene."

"The Palace of the Princess Irene," the Count repeated. "What did he there?"

"He dismounted, looked at the brass plate on the gate–post, went in, and asked if she were at home. Being told she was yet in the city, he said: 'A message for her to be delivered to–night. Here is a purse to pay for going. Tell her Aboo–Obeidah, the Singing Sheik'—only the Prophet knows of such a Sheik—'has been here, bidden by Sultan Mahommed to see if her house had been respected, and inquire if she has yet her health and happiness.' With that, he called for his horse, and went through the garden and up to the top of the promontory; then he returned to Hissar faster than he went to Therapia; and when, to take boat for the White Castle, he walked down the height, two of the Three Tails had to be lifted from their saddles, so nearly dead were they."

Here Ali stopped to laugh.

"Pardon me, O Emir," he resumed, "if I say last what I should have said first, it being the marrow of the bone I bring you… Before sitting to his pilaf, our Lord Mahommed sent me here. 'Thou knowest to get in and out of the unbelieving city,' he said. 'Go privily to the Emir Mirza, and bid him come to me to–night.'"

"What now, Ali?"

"My Lord was too wise to tell me."

"It is a great honor, Ali. I shall get ready immediately."

When the night was deep enough to veil the departure, the Count seated himself in the fisher's boat, a great cloak covering his armor. Half a mile below the Sweet Waters the party was halted.

"What is this, Ali?"

"The Lord Mahommed's galleys of war are down from the Black Sea. These are their outlyers."

At the side of one of the vessels, the Count showed the Sultan's signet, and there was no further interruption.

A few words now with respect to Corti.

He had become a Christian. Next, the bewilderment into which the first sight of the Princess Irene had thrown him instead of passing off had deepened into hopeless love.

And farther—Constantine, a genuine knight himself; in fact more knight than statesman; delighting in arms, armor, hounds, horses, and martial exercises, including tournaments, hawking, and hunting, found one abiding regret on his throne—he could have a favorite but never a comrade. The denial only stimulated the desire, until finally he concluded to bring the Italian to Court for observation and trial, his advancement to depend upon the fitness, tact, and capacity he might develop.

One day an order was placed in the Count's hand, directing him to find quarters at Blacherne. The Count saw the honor intended, and discerned that acceptance would place him in better position to get information for Mahommed, but what would the advantage avail if he were hindered in forwarding his budget promptly?

No, the mastership of the gate was of most importance; besides which the seclusion of the Julian residence was so favorable to the part he was playing; literally he had no one there to make him afraid.

Upon receipt of the order he called for his horse, and rode to Blacherne, where his argument of the necessity of keeping the Moslem crew of his galley apart brought about a compromise. His Majesty would require the Count's presence during the day, but permit him the nights at Julian. He was also allowed to retain command of the gate.

A few months then found him in Constantine's confidence, the imperial favorite. Yet more surprising as a coincidence, he actually became to the Emperor what he had been to Mahommed. He fenced and jousted with him, instructed him in riding, trained him to sword and bow. Every day during certain hours he had his new master's life at mercy. With a thrust of sword, stroke of battle–axe, or flash of an arrow, it was in his power to rid Mahommed of an opponent concerning whom he wrote: "O my Lord, I think you are his better, yet if ever you meet him in personal encounter, have a care."

But the unexpected now happened to the Count. He came to have an affection for this second lord which seriously interfered with his obligations to the first one. Its coming about was simple. Association with the Greek forced a comparison with the Turk. The latter's passion was a

tide before which the better gifts of God to rulers—mercy, justice, discrimination, recognition of truth, loyalty, services—were as willows in the sweep of a wave. Constantine, on the other hand, was thoughtful, just, merciful, tender–hearted, indisposed to offend or to fancy provocation intended. The difference between a man with and a man without conscience—between a king all whose actuations are dominated by religion and a king void of both conscience and religion—slowly but surely, we say, the difference became apparent to the Count, and had its inevitable consequences.

Such was the Count's new footing in Blacherne.

The changes wrought in his feeling were forwarded more than he was aware by the standing accorded him in the reception–room of the Princess Irene.

After the affair at the Cynegion he had the delicacy not to push himself upon the attention of the noble lady. In preference he sent a servant every morning to inquire after her health. Ere long he was the recipient of an invitation to come in person; after which his visits increased in frequency. Going to Blacherne, and coming from it, he stopped at her house, and with every interview it seemed his passion for her intensified.

Now it were not creditable to the young Princess' discernment to say she was blind to his feeling; yet she was careful to conceal the discovery from him, and still more careful not to encourage his hope. She placed the favor shown him to the account of gratitude; at the same time she admired him, and was deeply interested in the religious sentiment he was beginning to manifest.

In the Count's first audience after the rescue from the lion, she explained how she came to be drawn to the Cynegion. This led to detail of her relations with Sergius, concluding with the declaration: "I gave him the signal to speak in Sancta Sophia, and felt I could not live if he died the death, sent to it by me."

"Princess," the Count replied, "I heard the monk's sermon in Sancta Sophia, but did not know of your giving the signal. Has any one impugned

your motive in going to the Cynegion? Give me his name. My sword says you did well."

"Count Corti, the Lord has taken care of His own."

"As you say, Princess Irene. Hear me before addressing yourself to something else… I remember the words of the Creed—or if I have them wrong correct me: 'I believe in God, and Jesus Christ, his Son.'"

"It is word for word."

"Am I to understand you gave him the form?"

"The idea is Father Hilarion's."

"And the Two Articles. Are they indeed sayings of Jesus Christ?"

"Even so."

"Give me the book containing them."

Taking a New Testament from the table, she gave it to him.

"You will find the sayings easily. On the margins opposite them there are markings illuminated in gold."

"Thanks, O Princess, most humbly. I will return the book."

"No, Count, it is yours."

An expression she did not understand darkened his face.

"Are you a Christian?" she asked.

He flushed deeply, and bowed while answering:

"My mother is a Christian."

That night Count Corti searched the book, and found that the strength of faith underlying his mother's prayers for his return to her, and the Princess' determination to die with the monk, were but Christian lights.

"Princess Irene," he said one day, "I have studied the book you gave me; and knowing now who Christ is, I am ready to accept your Creed. Tell me how I may know myself a believer?"

A lamp in the hollow of an alabaster vase glows through the transparency; so her countenance responded to the joy behind it.

"Render obedience to His commands—do His will, O Count—then wilt thou be a believer in Christ, and know it."

The darkness she had observed fall once before on his face obscured it again, and he arose and went out in silence.

Brave he certainly was, and strong. Who could strike like him? He loved opposition for the delight there was in overcoming it; yet in his chamber that night he was never so weak. He resorted to the book, but could not read. It seemed to accuse him. "Thou Islamite—thou son of Mahomet, though born of a Christian, whom servest thou? Judas, what dost thou in this city? Hypocrite—traitor—which is thy master, Mahomet or Christ?"

He fell upon his knees, tore at his beard, buried his head in his arms. He essayed prayer to Christ.

"Jesus—Mother of Jesus—O my mother!" he cried in agony.

The hour he was accustomed to give to Mahommed came round. He drew out the writing materials. "The Princess"—thus he began a sentence, but stopped—something caught hold of his heart—the speaking face of the beloved woman appeared to him—her eyes were reproachful—her lips moved—she spoke: "Count Corti, I am she whom thou lovest; but what dost thou? Is it not enough to betray my kinsman? Thy courage—what makest thou of it but wickedness?… Write of me to thy master. Come every day, and contrive that I speak, then tell him of it. Am I sick? Tell him of it. Do I hold to this or that? Tell him. Am I shaken by visions of ruin to my country? Tell him of them. What is thy love if not the servant for hire of his love? Traitor—panderer!"

The Count pushed the table from him, and sprang to foot writhing. To shut out the word abhorrent above all other words, he clapped his hands tight over his ears—in vain.

"Panderer!"—he heard with his soul—"Panderer! When thou hast delivered me to Mahommed, what is he to give thee? How much?"

Thus shame, like a wild dog, bayed at him. For relief he ran out into the garden. And it was only the beginning of misery. Such the introduction or first chapter, what of the catastrophe? He could not sleep for shame.

In the morning he ordered his horse, but had not courage to go to Blacherne. How could he look at the kindly face of the master he was betraying? He thought of the Princess. Could he endure her salutation? She whom he was under compact to deliver to Mahommed? A paroxysm of despair seized him.

He rode to the Gate St. Romain, and out of it into the country. Gallop, gallop—the steed was good—his best Arab, fleet and tireless. Noon overtook him—few things else could—still he galloped. The earth turned into a green ribbon under the flying hoofs, and there was relief in the speed. The air, whisked through, was soothing. At length he came to a wood, wild and interminable, Belgrade, though he knew it not, and dismounting by a stream, he spent the day there. If now and then the steed turned its eyes upon him, attracted by his sighs, groans and prayer, there was at least no accusation in them. The solitude was restful; and returning after nightfall, he entered the city through the sortie under the Palace of Blacherne known as the Cercoporta.

It is well pain of spirit has its intermissions; otherwise long life could not be; and if sleep bring them, so much the better.

Next day betimes, the Count was at Blacherne.

"I pray grace, O my Lord!" he said, speaking to the question in the Emperor's look. "Yesterday I had to ride. This confinement in the city deadens me. I rode all day."

The good, easy master sighed: "Would I had been with you, Count."

Thus he dismissed the truancy. But with the Princess it was a lengthy chapter. If the Emperor was never so gracious, she seemed never so charming. He wrote to Mahommed in the evening, and walked the garden the residue of the night.

So weeks and months passed, and March came—even the night of the twenty–fifth, with its order from the Sultan to the White Castle—an interval of indecision, shame, and self–indictment. How many plans of relief he formed who can say? Suicide he put by, a very last resort. There was also a temptation to cut loose from Mahommed, and go boldly over to the Emperor. That would be a truly Christian enlistment for the

approaching war; and aside from conformity to his present sympathies, it would give him a right to wear the Princess' favor on his helmet. But a fear shook the resort out of mind. Mahommed, whether successful or defeated, would demand an explanation of him, possibly an accounting. He knew the Sultan. Of all the schemes presented, the most plausible was flight. There was the gate, and he its keeper, and beyond the gate, the sunny Italian shore, and his father's castle. The seas and sailing between were as green landscapes to a weary prisoner, and he saw in them only the joy of going and freedom to do. Welcome, and to God the praise! More than once he locked his portables of greatest value in the cabin of the galley. But alas! He was in bonds. Life in Constantinople now comprehended two of the ultimate excellencies to him, Princess Irene and Christ—and their joinder in the argument he took to be no offence.

From one to another of these projects he passed, and they but served to hide the flight of time. He was drifting—ahead, and not far, he heard the thunder of coming events—yet he drifted.

In this condition, the most envied man in Constantinople and the most wretched, the Sultan's order was delivered to him by Ali.

The time for decision was come. Tired—ashamed—angry with himself, he determined to force the end.

The Count arrived at the Castle, was immediately admitted to the Sultan; indeed, had he been less resolute, his master's promptitude would have been a circumstance of disturbing significance.

Observation satisfied him Mahommed was in the field; for with all his Epicureanism in times of peace, when a campaign was in progress the Conqueror resolved himself into a soldierly example of indifference to luxury. In other words, with respect to furnishment, the interior of the old Castle presented its every day ruggedness.

One lamp fixed to the wall near the door of the audience chamber struggled with the murk of a narrow passage, giving to view an assistant chamberlain, an armed sentinel, and two jauntily attired pages in waiting. Surrendering his sword to the chamberlain, the Count halted before the door, while being announced; at the same time, he noticed a man come out

of a neighboring apartment clad in black velvet from head to foot, followed closely by a servant. It was the Prince of India.

The mysterious person advanced slowly, his eyes fixed on the floor, his velvet–shod feet giving out no sound. His air indicated deep reflection. In previous encounters with him, the Count had been pleased; now his sensations were of repugnance mixed with doubt and suspicion. He had not time to account for the change. It may have had origin in the higher prescience sometimes an endowment of the spirit by which we stand advised of a friend or an enemy; most likely, however, it was a consequence of the curious tales abroad in Constantinople; for at the recognition up sprang the history of the Prince's connection with Lael, and her abandonment by him, the more extraordinary from the evidences of his attachment to her. Up sprang also the opinion of universal prevalence in the city that he had perished in the great fire. What did it all mean? What kind of man was he?

The servant carried a package wrapped in gold–embroidered green silk.

Coming near, the Prince raised his eyes—stopped—smiled—and said:

"Count Corti—or Mirza the Emir—which have I the honor of meeting?"

In spite of the offence he felt, Corti blushed, such a flood of light did the salutation let in upon the falsity of his position. Far from losing presence of mind, he perceived at once how intimately the Prince stood in the councils of the Sultan.

"The Lord Mahommed must be heard before I can answer," he returned, calmly.

In an instant the Prince became cordial.

"That was well answered," he said. "I am pleased to have my judgment of you confirmed. Your mission has been a trying one, but you have conducted it like a master. The Lord Mahommed has thanked me many times that I suggested you for it. He is impatient to see you. We will go in together."

Mahommed, in armor, was standing by a table on which were a bare cimeter, a lamp brightly burning, and two large unrolled maps. In one of

the latter, the Count recognized Constantinople and its environs cast together from his own surveys.

Retired a few steps were the two Viziers, Kalil Pacha and his rival, Saganos Pacha, the Mollah Kourani, and the Sheik Akschem–sed–din. The preaching of the Mollah had powerfully contributed to arousing the fanatical spirit of the Sultan's Mohammedan subjects. The four were standing in the attitude usual to Turkish officials in presence of a superior, their heads bowed, their hands upon their stomachs. In speaking, if they raised their eyes from the floor it was to shoot a furtive glance, then drop them again.

"This is the grand design of the work by which you will be governed," Mahommed said to the counsellors, laying the finger points of his right hand upon the map unknown to the Count, and speaking earnestly. "You will take it, and make copies tonight; for if the stars fail not, I will send the masons and their workmen to the other shore in the morning."

The advisers saluted—it would be difficult to say which of them with the greatest unction.

Looking sharply at Kalil, the master asked: "You say you superintended the running of the lines in person?"

Kalil saluted separately, and returned: "My Lord may depend upon the survey."

"Very well. I wait now only the indication of Heaven that the time is ripe for the movement. Is the Prince of India coming?"

"I am here, my Lord."

Mahommed turned as the Prince spoke, and let his eyes rest a moment upon Count Corti, without a sign of recognition.

"Come forward, Prince," he said. "What is the message you bring me?"

"My Lord," the Prince replied, after prostration, "in the Hebrew Scriptures there is a saying in proof of the influence the planets have in the affairs of men: 'Then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo; they fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.' Now art thou truly Sultan of Sultans. To–morrow—the

twenty–sixth of March—will be memorable amongst days, for then thou mayst begin the war with the perfidious Greek. From four o'clock in the morning the stars which fought against Sisera will fight for Mahommed. Let those who love him salute and rejoice."

The counsellors, dropping on their knees, fell forward, their faces on their hands. The Prince of India did the same. Count Corti alone remained standing, and Mahommed again observed him.

"Hear you," the latter said, to his officers. "Go assemble the masons and their workmen, the masters of boats, and the chiefs charged with duties. At four o'clock in the morning I will move against Europe. The stars have said it, and their permission is my law. Rise!"

As his associates were moving backward with repeated genuflections, the Prince of India spoke:

"O most favored of men! Let them stay a moment."

At a sign from the Sultan they halted; thereupon the Prince of India beckoned Syama to come, and taking the package from his hands, he laid it on the table.

"For my Lord Mahommed," he said.

"What is it?" Mahommed demanded.

"A sign of conquest… My Lord knows King Solomon ruled the world in his day, its soul of wisdom. At his death dominion did not depart from him. The secret ministers in the earth, the air and the waters, obedient to Allah, became his slaves. My Lord knows of whom I speak. Who can resist them?… In the tomb of Hiram, King of Tyre, the friend of King Solomon, I found a sarcophagus. It was covered with a model in marble of the Temple of the Hebrew Almighty God. Removing the lid, lo! the mummy of Hiram, a crown upon its head, and at its feet the sword of Solomon, a present without price. I brought it away, resolved to give it to him whom the stars should elect for the overthrow of the superstitions devised by Jesus, the bastard son of Joseph the carpenter of Nazareth… Undo the wrappings, Lord Mahommed."

The Sultan obeyed, and laying the last fold of the cloth aside, drew back staring, and with uplifted hands.

"Kalil—Kourani—Akschem–sed–din—all of you, come look. Tell me what it is—it blinds me."

The sword of Solomon lay before them; its curved blade a gleam of splendor, its scabbard a mass of brilliants, its hilt a ruby so pure we may say it retained in its heart the life of a flame.

"Take it in hand, Lord Mahommed," said the Prince of India.

The young Sultan lifted the sword, and as he did so down a groove in its back a stream of pearls started and ran, ringing musically, and would not rest while he kept the blade in motion. He was speechless from wonder.

"Now may my Lord march upon Constantinople, for the stars and every secret minister of Solomon will fight for him."

So saying, the Prince knelt before the Sultan, and laid his lips on the instep of his foot, adding: "Oh, my Lord! with that symbol in hand, march, and surely as Tabor is among the mountains and Carmel by the sea, so surely Christ will give place to Mahomet in Sancta Sophia. March at four o'clock."

And the counsellors left kisses on the same instep, and departed.

Thence through the night the noises of preparation kept the space between the hills of the narrows alive with echoes. At the hour permitted by the stars—four o'clock—a cloud of boats cast loose from the Asiatic shore, and with six thousand laborers, handmen to a thousand master masons, crossed at racing speed to Europe. "God is God, and Mahomet is his Prophet," they shouted. The vessels of burden, those with lime, those with stone, those with wood, followed as they were called, and unloading, hauled out, to give place to others.

Before sun up the lines of the triangular fort whose walls near Roumeli–Hissar are yet intact, prospectively a landmark enduring as the Pyramids, were defined and swarming with laborers. The three Pachas, Kalil, Sarudje, and Saganos, superintended each a side of the work, and over

them all, active and fiercely zealous, moved Mahommed, the sword of Solomon in his hand.

And there was no lack of material for the structure extensive as it was. Asia furnished its quota, and Christian towns and churches on the Bosphorus were remorselessly levelled for the stones in them; wherefore the outer faces of the curtains and towers are yet speckled with marbles in block, capital and column.

Thus Mahommed, taking his first step in the war so long a fervid dream, made sure of his base of operations.

On the twenty–eighth of August, the work completed, from his camp on the old Asometon promontory he reconnoitred the country up to the ditch of Constantinople, and on the first of September betook himself to Adrianople.

CHAPTER II

MAHOMMED AND COUNT CORTI MAKE A WAGER

Upon the retirement of the Prince of India and the counsellors, Mahommed took seat by the table, and played with the sword of Solomon, making the pearls travel up and down the groove in the blade, listening to their low ringing, and searching for inscriptions. This went on until Count Corti began to think himself forgotten. At length the Sultan, looking under the guard, uttered an exclamation—looked again—and cried out:

"O Allah! It is true!—May I be forgiven for doubting him!—Come, Mirza, come see if my eyes deceive me. Here at my side!"

The Count mastered his surprise, and was presently leaning over the Sultan's shoulder.

"You remember, Mirza, we set out together studying Hebrew. Against your will I carried you along with me until you knew the alphabet, and could read a little. You preferred Italian, and when I brought the learned men, and submitted to them that Hebrew was one of a family of tongues more or less alike, and would have sent you with them to the Sidonian coast for inscriptions, you refused. Do you remember?"

"My Lord, those were the happiest days of my life."

Mahommed laughed. "I kept you three days on bread and water, and let you off then because I could not do without you… But for the matter now. Under this guard—look—are not the brilliants set in the form of letters?"

Corti examined closely.

"Yes, yes; there are letters—I see them plainly—a name."

"Spell it."

"S–O–L–O–M–O–N."

"Then I have not deceived myself," Mahommed exclaimed. "Nor less has the Prince of India deceived me." He grew more serious. "A marvellous

man! I cannot make him out. The more I do with him the more incomprehensible he becomes. The long past is familiar to him as the present to me. He is continually digging up things ages old, and amazing me with them. Several times I have asked him when he was born, and he has always made the same reply: 'I will tell when you are Lord of Constantinople.'… How he hates Christ and the Christians!… This is indeed the sword of Solomon—and he found it in the tomb of Hiram, and gives it to me as the elect of the stars now. Ponder it, O Mirza! Now at the mid of the night in which I whistle up my dogs of war to loose them on the *Gabour*—How, Mirza—what ails you? Why that change of countenance? Is he not a dog of an unbeliever? On your knees before me—I have more to tell you than to ask. No, spurs are troublesome. To the door and bid the keeper there bring a stool—and look lest the lock have an ear hanging to it. Old Kalil, going out, though bowing, and lip–handing me, never took his eyes off you."

The stool brought, Corti was about to sit.

"Take off your cap"—Mahommed spoke sternly—"for as you are not the Mirza I sent away, I want to see your face while we talk. Sit here, in the full of the light."

The Count seated, placed his hooded cap on the floor. He was perfectly collected. Mahommed fingered the ruby hilt while searching the eyes which as calmly searched his.

"How brave you are!" the Sultan began, but stopped. "Poor Mirza!" he began again, his countenance softened. One would have said some tender recollection was melting the shell of his heart. "Poor Mirza! I loved you better than I loved my father, better than I loved my brothers, well as I loved my mother—with a love surpassing all I ever knew but one, and of that we will presently speak. If honor has a soul, it lives in you, and the breath you draw is its wine, purer than the first expressage of grapes from the Prophet's garden down by Medina. Your eyes look truth, your tongue drips it as a broken honey–comb drips honey. You are truth as God is God."

He was speaking sincerely.

"Fool—fool—that I let you go!—and I would not—no, by the rose–door of Paradise and the golden stairs to the House of Allah, I would not had I loved my full moon of full moons less. She was parted from me; and with whose eyes could I see her so well as with yours, O my falcon? Who else would report to me so truly her words? Love makes men and lions mad; it possessed me; and I should have died of it but for your ministering. Wherefore, O Mirza"—

The Count had been growing restive; now he spoke. "My Lord is about committing himself to some pledge. He were wise, did he hear me first."

"Perhaps so," the Sultan rejoined, uncertainly, but added immediately: "I will hear you."

"It is true, as my Lord said, I am not the Mirza he despatched to Italy. The changes I have undergone are material; and in recounting them I anticipate his anger. He sees before him the most wretched of men to whom death would be mercy."

"Is it so bad? You were happy when you went away. Was not the mission to your content?"

"My Lord's memory is a crystal cup from which nothing escapes—a cup without a leak. He must recall how I prayed to stay with him."

"Yes, yes."

"My dread was prophetic."

"Tell me of the changes."

"I will—and truly as there is but one God, and he the father of life and maker of things. First, then, the affection which at my going was my Lord's, and which gave me to see him as the Light of the World, and the perfection of glory in promise, is now divided."

"You mean there is another Light of the World? Be it so, and still you leave me flattered. How far you had to travel before finding the other! Who is he?"

"The Emperor of the Greeks."

"Constantine? Are his gifts so many and rich? The next."

"I am a Christian."

"Indeed? Perhaps you can tell me the difference between God and Allah. Yesterday Kourani said they were the same."

"Nay, my Lord, the difference is between Christ and Mahomet."

"The mother of the one was a Jewess, the mother of the other an Arab—I see. Go on."

The Count did not flinch. "My Lord, great as is your love of the Princess Irene"—Mahommed half raised his hands, his brows knit, his eyes filled with fire, but the Count continued composedly—"mine is greater."

The Sultan recovered himself.

"The proof, the proof!" he said, his voice a little raised. "My love of her is consuming me, but I see you alive."

"My Lord's demand is reasonable. I came here to make the avowal, and die. Would my Lord so much?"

"You would die for the Princess?"

"My Lord has said it."

"Is there not something else in the urgency?"

"Yes—honor."

The Count's astonishment was unspeakable. He expected an outburst of wrath unappeasable, a summons for an executioner; instead, Mahommed's eyes became humid, and resting his elbow on the table, and his face on the thumb and forefinger, he said, gazing sorrowfully:

"Ahmed was my little brother. His mother published before my father's death, that my mother was a slave. She was working for her child already, and I had him smothered in a bath. Cruel? God forgive me! It was my duty to provide for the peace of my people. I had a right to take care of myself; yet will I never be forgiven. Kismet!… I have had many men slain since. I travel, going to mighty events beckoned by destiny. The ordinary cheap soul cannot understand how necessary it is that my path should be smooth and clear; for sometime I may want to run; and he will amuse or avenge himself by stamping me in history a monster without a soul. Kismet!…

But you, my poor Mirza, you should know me better. You are my brother without guile. I am not afraid to love you. I do love you. Let us see… Your letters from Constantinople—I have them all—told me so much more than you intended, I could not suspect your fidelity. They prepared me for everything you have confessed. Hear how in my mind I disposed of them point by point… 'Mirza,' I said, 'pities the *Gabour* Emperor; in the end he will love him. Loving a hundred men is less miraculous in a man than loving one. He will make comparisons. Why not? The *Gabour* appeals to him through his weakness, I through my strength. I would rather be feared than pitied. Moreover, the *Gabour's* day runs to its close, and as it closes, mine opens. Pity never justified treason.'… And I said, too, on reading the despatch detailing your adventures in Italy: 'Poor Mirza! now has he discovered he is an Italian, stolen when a child, and having found his father's castle and his mother, a noble woman, he will become a Christian, for so would I in his place.' Did I stop there? The wife of the Pacha who received you from your abductors is in Broussa. I sent to her asking if she had a keepsake or memento which would help prove your family and country. See what she returned to me."

From under a cloth at the further end of the table, Mahommed drew a box, and opening it, produced a collar of lace fastened with a cameo pin. On the pin there was a graven figure.

"Tell me, Mirza, if you recognize the engraving." The Count took the cameo, looked at it, and replied, with a shaking voice:

"The arms of the Corti! God be praised!"

"And here—what are these, and what the name on them?"

Mahommed gave him a pair of red morocco half–boots for a child, on which, near the tops, a name was worked in silk.

"It is mine, my Lord—my name—'Ugo.'"

He cast himself before the Sultan, and embraced his knees, saying, in snatches as best he could:

"I do not know what my Lord intends—whether he means I am to die or live—if it be death, I pray him to complete his mercy by sending these

proofs to my mother"—

"Poor Mirza, arise! I prefer to have your face before me."

Directly the Count was reseated, Mahommed continued:

"And you, too, love the Princess Irene? You say you love her more than I? And you thought I could not endure hearing you tell it? That I would summon black Hassan with his bowstring? With all your opportunities, your seeing and hearing her, as the days multiplied from tens to hundreds, is it for me to teach you she will come to no man except as a sacrifice? What great thing have you to offer her? While I—well, by this sword of Solomon, to–morrow morning I set out to say to her: 'For thy love, O my full Moon of full Moons, for thy love thou shalt have the redemption of thy Church.'… And besides, did I not foresee your passion? Courtiers stoop low and take pains to win favor; but no courtier, not even a professional, intending merely to please me, could have written of her as you did; and by that sign, O Mirza, I knew you were in the extremity of passion. Offended? Not so, not so! I sent you to take care of her—fight for her—die, if her need were so great. Of whom might I expect such service but a lover? Did I not, the night of our parting, foretell what would happen?" He paused gazing at the ruby of the ring on his finger.

"See, Mirza! There has not been a waking hour since you left me but I have looked at this jewel; and it has kept color faithfully. Often as I beheld it, I said: 'Mirza loves her because he cannot help it; yet he is keeping honor with me. Mirza is truth, as God is God. From his hand will I receive her in Constantinople'"—

"O my Lord"—

"Peace, peace! The night wanes, and you have to return. Of what was I speaking? Oh, yes"—

"But hear me, my Lord. At the risk of your displeasure I must speak."

"What is it?"

"In her presence my heart is always like to burst, yet, as I am to be judged in the last great day, I have kept faith with my Lord. Once she thanked me—it was after I offered myself to the lion—O Heaven! how

nearly I lost my honor! Oh, the agony of that silence! The anguish of that remembrance! I have kept the faith, my Lord. But day by day now the will to keep it grows weaker. All that holds me steadfast is my position in Constantinople. What am I there?"

The Count buried his face in his hands, and through the links in his surcoat the tremor which shook his body was apparent.

Mahommed waited.

"What am I there? Having come to see the goodness of the Emperor, I must run daily to betray him. I am a Christian; yet as Judas sold his Master, I am under compact to sell my religion. I love a noble woman, yet am pledged to keep her safely, and deliver her to another. O my Lord, my Lord! This cannot go on. Shame is a vulture, and it is tearing me—my heart bleeds in its beak. Release me, or give me to death. If you love me, release me."

"Poor Mirza!"

"My Lord, I am not afraid."

Mahommed struck the table violently, and his eyes glittered. "That ever one should think I loved a coward! Yet more intolerable, that he whom I have called brother should know me so little! Can it be, O Mirza, can it be, you tell me these things imagining them new to me?… Let me have done. What we are saying would have become us ten years ago, not now. It is unmanly. I had a purpose in sending for you… Your mission in Constantinople ends in the morning at four o'clock. In other words, O Mirza, the condition passes from preparation for war with the *Gabour* to war. Observe now. You are a fighting man—a knight of skill and courage. In the rencounters to which I am going—the sorties, the assaults, the duels single and in force, the exchanges with all arms, bow, arbalist, guns small and great, the mines and countermines—you cannot stay out. You must fight. Is it not so?"

Corti's head arose, his countenance brightened.

"My Lord, I fear I run forward of your words—forgive me."

"Yes, give ear… The question now is, whom will you fight—me or the *Gabour?*"

"O my Lord"—

"Be quiet, I say. The issue is not whether you love me less. I prefer you give him your best service."

"How, my Lord?"

"I am not speaking in contempt, but with full knowledge of your superiority with weapons—of the many of mine who must go down before you. And that you may not be under restraint of conscience or arm–tied in the melee, I not only conclude your mission, but release you from every obligation to me."

"Every obligation!"

"I know my words, Emir, yet I will leave nothing uncertain… You will go back to the city free of every obligation to me—arm–free, mind–free. Be a Christian, if you like. Send me no more despatches advisory of the Emperor"—

"And the Princess Irene, my Lord?"

Mahommed smiled at the Count's eagerness.

"Have patience, Mirza… Of the moneys had from me, and the properties heretofore mine in trust, goods, horses, arms, armor, the galley and its crew, I give them to you without an accounting. You cannot deliver them to me or dispose of them, except with an explanation which would weaken your standing in Blacherne, if not undo you utterly. You have earned them."

Corti's face reddened.

"With all my Lord's generosity, I cannot accept this favor. Honor"—

"Silence, Emir, and hear me. I have never been careless of your honor. When you set out for Italy, preparatory to the mission at Constantinople, you owed me duty, and there was no shame in the performance; but now—so have the changes wrought—that which was honorable to Mirza the Emir is scandalous to Count Corti. After four o'clock you will owe me no duty; neither will you be in my service. From that hour Mirza, my falcon,

will cease to be. He will have vanished. Or if ever I know him more, it will be as Count Corti, Christian, stranger, and enemy."

"Enemy—my Lord's enemy? Never!"

The Count protested with extended arms.

"Yes, circumstances will govern. And now the Princess Irene."

Mahommed paused; then, summoning his might of will, and giving it expression in a look, he laid a forcible hand on the listener's shoulder.

"Of her now… I have devised a promotion for you, Emir. After to–night we will be rivals."

Corti was speechless—he could only stare.

"By the rose–door of Paradise—the only oath fit for a lover—or, as more becoming a knight, by this sword of Solomon, Emir, I mean the rivalry to be becoming and just. I have an advantage of you. With women rank and riches are as candles to moths. On the other side your advantage is double; you are a Christian, and may be in her eyes day after day. And not to leave you in mean condition, I give you the moneys and property now in your possession; not as a payment—God forbid!—but for pride's sake—my pride. Mahommed the Sultan may not dispute with a knight who has only a sword."

"I have estates in Italy."

"They might as well be in the moon. I shall enclose Constantinople before you could arrange with the Jews, and have money enough to buy a feather for your cap. If this were less true, comes then the argument: How can you dispose of the properties in hand, and quiet the gossips in the *Gabour's* palace? 'Where are your horses?' they will ask. What answer have you? 'Where your galley?' Answer. 'Where your Mohammedan crew?' Answer."

The Count yielded the debate, saying: "I cannot comprehend my Lord. Such thing was never heard of before."

"Must men be restrained because the thing they wish to do was never heard of before? Shall I not build a mosque with five minarets because other builders stopped with three?… To the sum of it all now. Christian or

Moslem, are you willing to refer our rivalry for the young woman to God?"

"My wonder grows with listening to my Lord."

"Nay, this surprises you because it is new. I have had it in mind for months. It did not come to me easily. It demanded self–denial—something I am unused to… Here it is—I am willing to call Heaven in, and let it decide whether she shall be mine or yours—this lily of Paradise whom all men love at sight. Dare you as much?"

The soldier spirit arose in the Count.

"Now or then, here or there, as my Lord may appoint. I am ready. He has but to name his champion."

"I protest. The duel would be unequal. As well match a heron and a hawk. There is a better way of making our appeal. Listen… The walls of Constantinople have never succumbed to attack. Hosts have dashed against them, and fled or been lost. It may be so with me; but I will march, and in my turn assault them, and thou defending with thy best might. If I am beaten, if I retire, be the cause of failure this or that, we—you and I, O Mirza—will call it a judgment of Heaven, and the Princess shall be yours; but if I success and enter the city, it shall be a judgment no less, and then"—Mahommed's eyes were full of fire—"then"—

"What then, my Lord?"

"Thou shalt see to her safety in the last struggle, and conduct her to Sancta Sophia, and there deliver her to me as ordered by God."

Corti was never so agitated. He turned pale and red—he trembled visibly.

Mahommed asked mockingly: "Is it Mirza I am treating with, or Count Corti? Are Christians so unwilling to trust God?"

"But, my Lord, it is a wager you offer me."

"Call it so."

"And its conditions imply slavery for the Princess. Change them, my Lord—allow her to be consulted and have her will, be the judgment this or that."

Mahommed clinched his hands.

"Am I a brute? Did ever woman lay her head on my breast perforce?"

The Count replied, firmly:

"Such a condition would be against us both alike."

The Sultan struggled with himself a moment.

"Be it so," he rejoined. "The wager is my proposal, and I will go through with it. Take the condition, Emir. If I win, she shall come to me of her free will or not at all."

"A wife, my Lord?"

"In my love first, and in my household first—my Sultana."

The animation which then came to the Count was wonderful. He kissed Mahommed's hand.

"Now has my Lord outdone himself in generosity. I accept. In no other mode could the issue be made so absolutely a determination of Heaven."

Mahommed arose.

"We are agreed.—The interview is finished.—Ali is waiting for you."

He replaced the cover on the box containing the collar and the half–boots.

"I will send these to the Countess your mother; for hereafter you are to be to me Ugo, Count Corti… My falcon hath cast its jess and hood. Mirza is no more. Farewell Mirza."

Corti was deeply moved. Prostrating himself, he arose, and replied:

"I go hence more my Lord's lover than ever. Death to the stranger who in my presence takes his name in vain."

As he was retiring, Mahommed spoke again:

"A word, Count… In what we are going to, the comfort and safety of the Princess Irene may require you to communicate with me. You have ready wit for such emergencies. Leave me a suggestion."

Corti reflected an instant.

"The signal must proceed from me," he said. "My Lord will pitch his tent in sight"—

"By Solomon, and this his sword, yes! Every *Gabour* who dares look over the wall shall see it while there is a hill abiding."

The Count bowed.

"I know my Lord, and give him this—God helping me, I will make myself notorious to the besiegers as he will be to the besieged. If at any time he sees my banderole, or if it be reported to him, let him look if my shield be black; if so, he shall come himself with a shield the color of mine, and place himself in my view. My Lord knows I make my own arrows. If I shoot one black feathered, he must pick it up. The ferrule will be of hollow lead covering a bit of scrip."

"Once more, Count Corti, the issue is with God. Good night."

Traversing the passage outside the door, the Count met the Prince of India.

"An hour ago I would have entitled you Emir: but now"—the Prince smiled while speaking—"I have stayed to thank Count Corti for his kindness to my black friend Nilo."

"Your servant?"

"My friend and ally—Nilo the King… If the Count desires to add to the obligation, he will send the royal person to me with Ali when he returns to–night."

"I will send him."

"Thanks, Count Corti."

The latter lingered, gazing into the large eyes and ruddy face, expecting at least an inquiry after Lael. He received merely a bow, and the words: "We will meet again."

Night was yet over the city, when Ali, having landed the Count, drew out of the gate with Nilo. The gladness of the King at being restored to his master can be easily fancied.

CHAPTER III

THE BLOODY HARVEST

In June, a few days after the completion of the enormous work begun by Mahommed on the Asometon promontory, out of a gate attached to the High Residence of Blacherne, familiarly known as the Caligaria, there issued a small troop of horsemen of the imperial military establishment.

The leader of this party—ten in all—was Count Corti. Quite a body of spectators witnessed the exit, and in their eyes he was the most gallant knight they had ever seen. They cheered him as, turning to the right after issuance from the gate, he plunged at a lively trot into the ravine at the foot of the wall, practically an immense natural fosse. "God and our Lady of Blacherne," they shouted, and continued shouting while he was in sight, notwithstanding he did not so much as shake the banderole on his lance in reply.

Of the Count's appearance this morning it is unnecessary to say more than that he was in the suit of light armor habitual to him, and as an indication of serious intent, bore, besides the lance, a hammer or battle–axe fixed to his saddle–bow, a curved sword considerably longer, though not so broad as a cimeter, a bow and quiver of arrows at his back, and a small shield or buckler over the quiver. The favorite chestnut Arab served him for mount, its head and neck clothed in flexible mail. The nine men following were equipped like himself in every particular, except that their heads were protected by close–fitting conical caps, and instead of armor on their legs, they wore flowing red trousers.

Of them it may be further remarked, their mode of riding, due to their short stirrups, was indicative of folk akin to the Bedouin of the Desert.

Upon returning from the last interview with Mahommed in the White Castle, the Count had subjected the crew of his galley to rigorous trial of fitness for land service. Nine of them he found excellent riders after their

fashion, and selecting them as the most promising, he proceeded to instruct them in the use of the arms they were now bearing. His object in this small organization was a support to rush in after him rather than a battle front. That is, in a charge he was to be the lance's point, and they the broadening of the lance's blade; while he was engaged, intent on the foe before him, eight of them were to guard him right and left, and, as the exigencies of combat might demand, open and close in fan–like movement. The ninth man was a fighter in their rear. In the simple manoeuvring of this order of battle he had practised them diligently through the months. The skill attained was remarkable; and the drilling having been in the Hippodrome, open to the public, the concourse to see it had been encouraging.

In truth, the wager with Mahommed had supplied the Count with energy of body and mind. He studied the chances of the contest, knowing how swiftly it was coming, and believed it possible to defend the city successfully. At all events, he would do his best, and if the judgment were adverse, it should not be through default on his part.

The danger—and he discerned it with painful clearness—was in the religious dissensions of the Greeks; still he fancied the first serious blow struck by the Turks, the first bloodshed, would bring the factions together, if only for the common safety.

It is well worth while here to ascertain the views and feelings of the people whom Count Corti was thus making ready to defend. This may be said of them generally: It seemed impossible to bring them to believe the Sultan really intended war against the city.

"What if he does?" they argued. "Who but a young fool would think of such a thing? If he comes, we will show him the banner of the Blessed Lady from the walls."

If in the argument there was allusion to the tower on the Asometon heights, so tall one could stand on its lead–covered roof, and looking over the intermediate hills, almost see into Constantinople, the careless populace hooted at the exaggeration: "There be royal idiots as well as

every–day idiots. Staring at us is one thing, shooting at us is another. Towers with walls thirty feet thick are not movable."

One day a report was wafted through the gates that a gun in the water battery of the new Turkish fort had sunk a passing ship. "What flag was the ship flying?""The Venetian.""Ah, that settles it," the public cried. "The Sultan wants to keep the Venetians out of the Black Sea. The Turks and the Venetians have always been at war."

A trifle later intelligence came that the Sultan, lingering at Basch–Kegan, supposably because the air along the Bosphorus was better than the air at Adrianople, had effected a treaty by which the Podesta of Galata bound his city to neutrality; still the complacency of the Byzantines was in no wise disturbed. "Score one for the Genoese. It is good to hear of their beating the Venetians."

Occasionally a wanderer—possibly a merchant, more likely a spy—passing the bazaars of Byzantium, entertained the booth–keepers with stories of cannon being cast for the Sultan so big that six men tied together might be fired from them at once. The Greeks only jeered. Some said: "Oh, the Mahound must be intending a salute for the man in the moon of Ramazan!" Others decided: "Well, he is crazier than we thought him. There are many hills on the road to Adrianople, and at the foot of every hill there is a bridge. To get here he must invent wings for his guns, and even then it will be long before they can be taught to fly."

At times, too, the old city was set agog with rumors from the Asiatic provinces opposite that the Sultan was levying unheard–of armies; he had half a million recruits already, but wanted a million. "Oh, he means to put a lasting quietus on Huniades and his Hungarians. He is sensible in taking so many men."

In compliment to the intelligence of the public, this obliviousness to danger had one fostering circumstance—the gates of the city on land and water stood open day and night.

"See," it was everywhere said, "the Emperor is not alarmed. Who has more at stake than he? He is a soldier, if he is an *azymite*. He keeps ambassadors with the Sultan—what for, if not to be advised?"

And there was a great deal in the argument.

At length the Greek ambassadors were expelled by Mahommed. It was while he lay at Basch–Kegan. They themselves brought the news. This was ominous, yet the public kept its spirits. The churches, notably Sancta Sophia, were more than usually crowded with women; that was all, for the gates not only remained open, but traffic went in and out of them unhindered—out even to the Turkish camp, the Byzantines actually competing with their neighbors of Galata in the furnishment of supplies. Nay, at this very period every morning a troop of the Imperial guard convoyed a wagon from Blacherne out to Basch–Kegan laden with the choicest food and wines; and to the officer receiving them the captain of the convoy invariably delivered himself: "From His Majesty, the Emperor of the Romans and Greeks, to the Lord Mahommed, Sultan of the Turks. Prosperity and long life to the Sultan."

If these were empty compliments, if the relations between the potentates were slippery, if war were hatching, what was the Emperor about?

Six months before the fort opposite the White Castle was begun, Constantine had been warned of Mahommed's projected movement against his capital. The warning was from Kalil Pacha; and whether Kalil was moved by pity, friendship, or avarice is of no moment; certain it is the Emperor acted upon the advice. He summoned a council, and proposed war; but was advised to send a protesting embassy to the enemy. A scornful answer was returned. Seeing the timidity of his cabinet, cast upon himself, he resolved to effect a policy, and accordingly expostulated, prayed, sent presents, offered tribute, and by such means managed to satisfy his advisers; yet all the time he was straining his resources in preparation.

In the outset, he forced himself to face two facts of the gravest import: first, of his people, those of age and thews for fighting were in frocks, burrowing in monasteries; next, the clergy and their affiliates were his enemies, many openly preferring a Turk to an *azymite*. A more discouraging prospect it is difficult to imagine. There was but one hope left him. Europe was full of professional soldiers. Perhaps the Pope had

influence to send him a sufficient contingent. Would His Holiness interest himself so far? The brave Emperor despatched an embassy to Rome, promising submission to the Papacy, and praying help in Christ's name.

Meantime his agents dispersed themselves through the Aegean, buying provisions and arms, enginery, and war material of all kinds. This business kept his remnant of a navy occupied. Every few days a vessel would arrive with stores for the magazine under the Hippodrome. By the time the fort at Roumeli Hissar was finished, one of his anxieties was in a measure relieved. The other was more serious. Then the frequency with which he climbed the Tower of Isaac, the hours he passed there gazing wistfully southward down the mirror of the Marmora, became observable. The valorous, knightly heart, groaning under the humiliations of the haughty Turk, weary not less of the incapacity of his own people to perceive their peril, and arise heroically to meet it, found opportunity to meditate while he was pacing the lofty lookout, and struggling to descry the advance of the expected succor.

In this apology the reader who has wondered at the inaction of the Emperor what time the Sultan was perfecting his Asiatic communications is answered. There was nothing for him but a siege. To that alternative the last of the Romans was reduced. He could not promise himself enough of his own subjects to keep the gates, much less take the field.

The country around Constantinople was given to agriculture. During the planting season, and the growing, the Greek husbandmen received neither offence nor alarm from the Turks. But in June, when the emerald of the cornfields was turning to gold, herds of mules and cavalry horses began to ravage the fields, and the watchmen, hastening from their little huts on the hills to drive them out, were set upon by the soldiers and beaten. They complained to the Emperor, and he sent an embassy to the Sultan praying him to save the crops from ruin. In reply, Mahommed ordered the son of Isfendiar, a relative, to destroy the harvest. The peasants resisted, and not unsuccessfully. In the South, and in the fields near Hissar on the north, there were deaths on both sides. Intelligence of the affair coming to Constantine, he summoned Count Corti.

"The long expected has arrived," he said. "Blood has been shed. My people have been attacked and slain in their fields; their bodies lie out unburied. The war cannot be longer deferred. It is true the succors from the Holy Father have not arrived; but they are on the way, and until they come we must defend ourselves. Cold and indifferent my people have certainly been. Now I will make a last effort to arouse them. Go out toward Hissar, and recover the dead. Have the bodies brought in just as they are. I will expose them in the Hippodrome. Perhaps their bruises and blood may have an effect; if not, God help this Christian city. I will give you a force."

"Your Majesty," the Count replied, "such an expedition might provoke an advance upon the city before you are entirely prepared. Permit me to select a party from my own men.""As you choose. A guide will accompany you."

To get to the uplands, so to speak, over which, north of Galata, the road to Hissar stretched, Corti was conducted past the Cynegion and through the districts of Eyoub to the Sweet Waters of Europe, which he crossed by a bridge below the site of the present neglected country palace of the Sultan. Up on the heights he turned left of Pera, and after half an hour's rapid movement was trending northward parallel with the Bosphorus, reaches of which were occasionally visible through cleftings of the mountainous shore. Straw–thatched farmhouses dotted the hills and slopes, and the harvest spread right and left in cheerful prospect.

The adventurer had ample time to think; but did little of it, being too full of self–gratulation at having before him an opportunity to recommend himself to the Emperor, with a possibility of earning distinction creditable in the opinion of the Princess Irene.

At length an exclamation of his guide aroused him to action.

"The Turks, the Turks!"

"Where?"

"See that smoke."

Over a hilltop in his front, the Count beheld the sign of alarm crawling slowly into the sky.

"Here is a village—to our left, but"—

"Have done," said Corti, "and get me to the fire. Is there a nearer way than this?"

"Yes, under the hill yonder."

"Is it broken?"

"It narrows to a path, but is clear."

The Count spoke in Arabic to his followers, and taking the gallop, pushed the guide forward. Shortly a party of terror–stricken peasants ran down toward him.

"Why do you run? What is the matter?" he asked.

"Oh, the Turks, the Turks!"

"What of them? Stand, and tell me."

"We went to work this morning cutting corn, for it is now ripe enough. The Mahounds broke in on us. We were a dozen to their fifty or more. We only escaped, and they set fire to the field. O Christ, and the Most Holy Mother! Let us pass, or we too will be slain!"

"Are they mounted?"

"Some have horses, some are afoot."

"Where are they now?"

"In the field on the hill."

"Well, go to the village fast as you can, and tell the men there to come and pick up their dead. Tell them not to fear, for the Emperor has sent me to take care of them."

With that the Count rode on.

This was the sight presented him when he made the ascent: A wheat field sloping gradually to the northeast; fire creeping across it crackling, smoking, momentarily widening; through the cloud a company of Turkish soldiers halted, mostly horsemen, their arms glinting brightly in the noon sun; blackened objects, unmistakably dead men, lying here and there. Thus the tale of the survivors of the massacre was confirmed.

Corti gave his lance with the banderole on it to the guide. By direction his Berbers drove their lances into the earth that they might leave them standing, drew their swords, and brought their bucklers forward. Then he led them into the field. A few words more, directions probably, and he started toward the enemy, his followers close behind two and two, with a rear–guardsman. He allowed no outcry, but gradually increased the pace.

There were two hundred and more yards to be crossed, level, except the slope, and with only the moving line of fire as an impediment. The crop, short and thin, was no obstacle under the hoofs.

The Turks watched the movement herded, like astonished sheep. They may not have comprehended that they were being charged, or they may have despised the assailants on account of their inferiority in numbers, or they may have relied on the fire as a defensive wall; whatever the reason, they stood passively waiting.

When the Count came to the fire, he gave his horse the spur, and plunging into the smoke and through the flame full speed, appeared on the other side, shouting: "Christ and Our Lady of Blacherne!" His long sword flashed seemingly brighter of the passage just made. Fleckings of flame clung to the horses. What the battle–cry of the Berbers we may not tell. They screamed something un–Christian, echoes of the Desert. Then the enemy stirred; some drew their blades, some strung their bows; the footmen amongst them caught their javelins or half–spears in the middle, and facing to the rear, fled, and kept flying, without once looking over their shoulders.

One man mounted, and in brighter armor than the others, his steel cap surmounted with an immense white turban, a sparkling aigrette pinned to the turban, cimeter in hand, strove to form his companions—but it was too late. "Christ and our Lady of Blacherne!"—and with that Corti was in their midst; and after him, into the lane he opened, his Berbers drove pell–mell, knocking Turks from their saddles, and overthrowing horses—and there was cutting and thrusting, and wounds given, and souls rendered up through darkened eyes.

The killing was all on one side; then as a bowl splinters under a stroke, the Turkish mass flew apart, and went helter–skelter off, each man striving to take care of himself. The Berbers spared none of the overtaken.

Spying the man with the showy armor, the Count made a dash to get to him, and succeeded, for to say truth, he was not an unwilling foeman. A brief combat took place, scarcely more than a blow, and the Turk was disarmed and at mercy.

"Son of Isfendiar," said Corti, "the slaying these poor people with only their harvest knives for weapons was murder. Why should I spare your life?"

"I was ordered to punish them."

"By whom?"

"My Lord the Sultan."

"Do your master no shame. I know and honor him."

"Yesterday they slew our Moslems."

"They but defended their own… You deserve death, but I have a message for the Lord Mahommed. Swear by the bones of the Prophet to deliver it, and I will spare you."

"If you know my master, as you say, he is quick and fierce of temper, and if I must die, the stroke may be preferable at your hand. Give me the message first."

"Well, come with me."

The two remained together until the flight and pursuit were ended; then, the fire reduced to patches for want of stalks to feed it, the Count led the way back to the point at which he entered the field. Taking his lance from the guide, he passed it to the prisoner.

"This is what I would have you do," he said. "The lance is mine. Carry it to your master, the Lord Mahommed, and say to him, Ugo, Count Corti, salute him, and prays him to look at the banderole, and fix it in his memory. He will understand the message, and be grateful for it. Now will you swear?"

The banderole was a small flag of yellow silk, with a red moon in the centre, and on the face of the moon a white cross. Glancing at it, the son of Isfendiar replied:

"Take off the cross, and you show me a miniature standard of the *Silihdars*, my Lord's guard of the Palace." Then looking the Count full in the face, he added: "Under other conditions I should salute you Mirza, Emir of the Hajj."

"I have given you my name and title. Answer."

"I will deliver the lance and message to my Lord—I swear it by the bones of the Prophet."

Scarcely had the Turk disappeared in the direction of Hissar, when a crowd of peasants, men and women, were seen coming timorously from the direction of the village. The Count rode to meet them, and as they were provided with all manner of litters, by his direction the dead Greeks were collected, and soon, with piteous lamentations, a funeral cortege was on the road moving slowly to Constantinople. Anticipating a speedy reappearance of the Turks, hostilities being now unavoidable, Count Corti despatched messengers everywhere along the Bosphorus, warning the farmers and villagers to let their fields go, and seek refuge in the city. So it came about that the escort of the murdered peasants momentarily increased until at the bridge over the Sweet Waters of Europe it became a column composed for the most part of women, children, and old men. Many of the women carried babies. The old men staggered under such goods as they could lay their hands on in haste. The able–bodied straggled far in the rear with herds of goats, sheep, and cattle; the air above the road rang with cries and prayers, and the road itself was sprinkled with tears. In a word, the movement was a flight.

Corti, with his Berbers, lingered in the vicinity of the field of fight watchful of the enemy. In the evening, having forwarded a messenger to the Emperor, he took stand at the bridge; and well enough, for about dusk a horde of Turkish militia swept down from the heights in search of plunder and belated victims. At the first bite of his sword, they took to their heels, and were not again seen.

By midnight the settlements and farmhouses of the up–country were abandoned; almost the entire district from Galata to Fanar on the Black Sea was reduced to ashes. The Greek Emperor had no longer a frontier or a province—all that remained to him was his capital.

Many of the fugitives, under quickening of the demonstration at the bridge, threw their burdens away; so the greater part of them at an early hour after nightfall appeared at the Adrianople gate objects of harrowing appeal, empty–handed, broken down, miserable.

Constantine had the funeral escort met at the gate by torch–bearers, and the sextons of the Blacherne Chapel. Intelligence of the massacre, and that the corpses of the harvesters would be conveyed to the Hippodrome for public exposure, having been proclaimed generally through the city, a vast multitude was also assembled at the gate. The sensation was prodigious.

There were twenty litters, each with a body upon it unwashed and in bloody garments, exactly as brought in. On the right and left of the litters the torchmen took their places. The sextons lit their long candles, and formed in front. Behind trudged the worn, dust–covered, wretched fugitives; and as they failed to realize their rescue, and that they were at last in safety, they did not abate their lamentations. When the innumerable procession passed the gate, and commenced its laborious progress along the narrow streets, seldom, if ever, has anything of the kind more pathetic and funereally impressive been witnessed.

Let be said what may, after all nothing shall stir the human heart like the faces of fellowmen done to death by a common enemy. There was no misjudgment of the power of the appeal in this instance. It is no exaggeration to say Byzantium was out assisting—so did the people throng the thoroughfares, block the street intersections, and look down from the windows and balconies. Afar they heard the chanting of the sextons, monotonous, yet solemnly effective; afar they saw the swaying candles and torches; and an awful silence signalized the approach of the pageant; but when it was up, and the bodies were borne past, especially when the ghastly countenances of the sufferers were under eye plainly visible in the red torchlight, the outburst of grief and rage in every form,

groans, curses, prayers, was terrible, and the amazing voice, such by unity of utterance, went with the dead, and followed after them until at last the Hippodrome was reached. There the Emperor, on horseback, and with his court and guards, was waiting, and his presence lent nationality to the mournful spectacle.

Conducting the bearers of the litters to the middle of the oblong area, he bade them lay their burdens down, and summoned the city to the view.

"Let there be no haste," he said, "for, in want of their souls, the bruised bodies of our poor countrymen shall lie here all tomorrow, every gaping wound crying for vengeance. Then on the next day it will be for us to say what we will do—fight, fly, or surrender."

Through the remainder of the night the work of closing the gates and making them secure continued without cessation. The guards were strengthened at each of them, and no one permitted to pass out. Singular to say, a number of eunuchs belonging to the Sultan were caught and held. Some of the enraged Greeks insisted on their death; but the good heart of the Emperor prevailed, and the prisoners were escorted to their master. The embassy which went with them announced the closing of the gates.

"Since neither oaths, nor treaty, nor submission can secure peace, pursue your impious warfare"—thus Constantine despatched to Mahommed. "My trust is in God; if it shall please him to mollify your heart, I shall rejoice in the change; if he delivers the city in your hands, I submit without a murmur to his holy will. But until he shall pronounce between us, it is my duty to live and die in defence of my people."**[52]**

Mahommed answered with a formal declaration of war.

It remains to say that the bodies of the harvesters were viewed as promised. They lay in a row near the Twisted Serpent, and the people passed them tearfully; in the night they were taken away and buried.

Sadder still, the result did not answer the Emperor's hope. The feeling, mixed of sorrow and rage, was loudly manifested; but it was succeeded by fear, and when the organization of companies was attempted, the exodus was shameful. Thousands fled, leaving about one hundred thousand

behind, not to fight, but firm in the faith that Heaven would take care of the city.

After weeks of effort, five thousand Greeks took the arms offered them, and were enrolled.

CHAPTER IV

EUROPE ANSWERS THE CRY FOR HELP

A man in love, though the hero of many battles, shall be afraid in the presence of his beloved, and it shall be easier for him to challenge an enemy than to ask her love in return.

Count Corti's eagerness to face the lion in the gallery of the Cynegion had established his reputation in Constantinople for courage; his recent defence of the harvesters raised it yet higher; now his name was on every tongue.

His habit of going about in armor had in the first days of his coming subjected him to criticism; for the eyes before which he passed belonged for the most part to a generation more given to prospecting for bezants in fields of peace than the pursuit of glory in the ruggeder fields of war. But the custom was now accepted, and at sight of him, mounted and in glistening armor, even the critics smiled, and showered his head with silent good wishes, or if they spoke it was to say to each other: "Oh, that the Blessed Mother would send us more like him!" And the Count knew he had the general favor. We somehow learn such things without their being told us.

Up in the empyrean courtly circles his relations were quite as gratifying. The Emperor made no concealment of his partiality, and again insisted on bringing him to Blacherne.

"Your Majesty," the Count said one day, "I have no further need of my galley and its crew. I beg you to do with them as you think best."

Constantine received the offer gratefully.

"The galley is a godsend. I will order payment for it. Duke Notaras, the Grand Admiral, will agree with you about the price."

"If Your Majesty will permit me to have my way," the Count rejoined, "you will order the vessel into the harbor with the fleet, and if the result of the war is with Your Majesty, the Grand Admiral can arrange for the payment; if otherwise"—he smiled at the alternative—"I think neither Your Majesty nor myself will have occasion for a ship."

The galley was transferred from the Bay of Julian to anchorage in the Golden Horn. That night, speaking of the tender, the Emperor said to Phranza: "Count Corti has cast his lot with us. As I interpret him, he does not mean to survive our defeat. See that he be charged to select a bodyguard to accompany me in action."

"Is he to be Captain of the guard?"

"Yes."

The duty brought the Count to Blacherne. In a few days he had fifty men, including his nine Berbers.

These circumstances made him happy. He found peace of mind also in his release from Mahommed. Not an hour of the day passed without his silently thanking the Sultan for his magnanimity.

But no matter for rejoicing came to him like the privilege of freely attending the Princess Irene.

Not only was her reception–room open to him; whether she went to Blacherne or Sancta Sophia, he appeared in her train. Often when the hour of prayer arrived, she invited him as one of her household to accompany her to the apartment she had set apart for chapel exercises; and at such times he strove to be devout, but in taking her for his pattern of conduct—as yet he hardly knew when to arise or kneel, or cross himself—if his thoughts wandered from the Madonna and Child to her, if sometimes he fell to making comparisons in which the Madonna suffered as lacking beauty—nay, if not infrequently he caught himself worshipping the living woman at the foot of the altar rather than the divinity above it, few there were who would have been in haste to condemn him even in that day. There is nothing modern in the world's love of a lover.

By the treaty with Mahommed he was free to tell the Princess of his passion; and there were moments in which it seemed he must cast himself at her feet and speak; but then he would be seized with a trembling, his tongue would unaccountably refuse its office, and he would quiet himself with the weakling's plea—another time—to–morrow, to–morrow. And always upon the passing of the opportunity, the impulse being laid with so many of its predecessors in the graveyard of broken resolutions—every swain afraid keeps such a graveyard—always he sallied from her door eager for an enemy on whom to vent his vexation. "Ah," he would say, with prolonged emphasis upon the exclamation—"if Mahommed were only at the gate! Is he never coming?"

One day he dismounted at the Princess' door, and was ushered into the reception–room by Lysander. "I bring you good news," he said, in course of the conversation.

"What now?" she asked.

"Every sword counts. I am just from the Port of Blacherne, whither I accompanied the Grand Equerry to assist in receiving one John Grant, who has arrived with a following of Free Lances, mostly my own countrymen."

"Who is John Grant?"

"A German old in Eastern service; more particularly an expert in making and throwing hollow iron balls filled with inflammable liquid. On striking, the balls burst, after which the fire is unquenchable with water."

"Oh! our Greek fire rediscovered!"

"So he declares. His Majesty has ordered him the materials he asks, and that he go to work to–morrow getting a store of his missiles ready. The man declares also, if His Holiness would only proclaim a crusade against the Turks. Constantinople has not space on her walls to hold the volunteers who would hasten to her defence. He says Genoa, Venice, all Italy, is aroused and waiting."

"John Grant is welcome," the Princess returned; "the more so that His Holiness is slow."

Afterward, about the first of December, the Count again dismounted at her door with news.

"What is it now?" she inquired.

"Noble Princess, His Holiness has been heard from."

"At last?"

"A Legate will arrive to–morrow."

"Only a Legate! What is his name?"

"Isidore, Grand Metropolitan of Russia."

"Brings he a following?"

"No soldiers; only a suite of priests high and low."

"I see. He comes to negotiate. Alas!"

"Why alas?"

"Oh, the factions, the factions!" she exclaimed, disconsolately; then, seeing the Count still in wonder, she added: "Know you not that Isidore, familiarly called the Cardinal, was appointed Metropolitan of the Russian Greek Church by the Pope, and, rejected by it, was driven to refuge in Poland? What welcome can we suppose he will receive here?"

"Is he not a Greek?"

"Yes, truly; but being a Latin Churchman, the Brotherhoods hold him an apostate. His first demand will be to celebrate mass in Sancta Sophia. If the world were about shaking itself to pieces, the commotion would be but little greater than the breaking of things we will then hear. Oh, it is an ill wind which blows him to our gates!" Meantime the Hippodrome had been converted into a Campus Martius, where at all hours of the day the newly enlisted men were being drilled in the arms to which they were assigned; now as archers, now as slingers; now with balistas and catapults and arquebuses; now to the small artillery especially constructed for service on the walls. And as trade was at an end in the city, as in fact martial preparation occupied attention to the exclusion of business in the commercial sense, the ancient site was a centre of resort. Thither the

Count hastened to work off the disheartenment into which the comments of the Princess had thrown him.

That same week, however, he and the loyal population of Constantinople in general, were cheered by a coming of real importance. Early one morning some vessels of war hove in sight down the Marmora. Their flags proclaimed them Christian. Simultaneously the lookouts at Point Demetrius reported a number of Turkish galleys plying to and fro up the Bosphorus. It was concluded that a naval battle was imminent. The walls in the vicinity of the Point were speedily crowded with spectators. In fact, the anxiety was great enough to draw the Emperor from his High Residence. Not doubting the galleys were bringing him stores, possibly reinforcements, he directed his small fleet in the Golden Horn to be ready to go to their assistance. His conjecture was right; yet more happily the Turks made no attempt upon them. Turning into the harbor, the strangers ran up the flags of Venice and Genoa, and never did they appear so beautiful, seen by Byzantines—never were they more welcome. The decks were crowded with helmed men who responded vigorously to the cheering with which they were saluted.

Constantine in person received the newcomers at the Port of Blacherne. From the wall over the gate the Princess Irene, with an escort of noble ladies, witnessed the landing.

A knight of excellent presence stepped from a boat, and announced himself.

"I am John Justiniani of Genoa," he said, "come with two thousand companions in arms to the succor of the most Christian Emperor Constantine. Guide me to him, I pray."

"The Emperor is here—I am he."

Justiniani kissed the hand extended to him, and returned with fervor:

"Christ and the Mother be praised! Much have I been disquieted lest we should be too late. Your Majesty, command me."

"Duke Notaras," said the Emperor, "assist this noble gentleman and his companions. When they are disembarked, conduct them to me. For the

present I will lodge them in my residence." Then he addressed the Genoese: "Duke Notaras, High Admiral of the Empire, will answer your every demand. In God's name, and for the imperilled religion of our Redeeming Lord, I bid you welcome."

It seemed the waving of scarfs and white hands on the wall, and the noisy salutations of the people present, were not agreeable to the Duke; although coldly polite, he impressed Justiniani as an ill second to the stately but courteous Emperor.

At night there was an audience in the Very High Residence, and Justiniani assisted Phranza in the presentation of his companions; and though the banquet which shortly succeeded the audience may not, in the courses served or in its table splendors, have vied with those Alexis resorted to for the dazzlement of the chiefs of the first crusade, it was not entirely wanting in such particulars; for it has often happened, if the chronicles may be trusted, that the expiring light of great countries has lingered longest in their festive halls, just as old families have been known to nurture their pride in sparkling heirlooms, all else having been swept away. The failings on this occasion, if any there were, Constantine more than amended by his engaging demeanor. Soldier not less than Emperor, he knew to win the sympathy and devotion of soldiers. Of his foreign guests that evening many afterwards died hardly distinguishing between him and the Holy Cause which led them to their fate.

The table was long, and without head or foot. On one side, in the middle, the Emperor presided; opposite him sat the Princess Irene; and on their right and left, in gallant interspersion, other ladies, the wives and daughters of senators, nobles, and officials of the court, helped charm the Western chivalry.

And of the guests, the names of a few have been preserved by history, together with the commands to which they were assigned in the siege.

There was Andrew Dinia, under Duke Notaras, a captain of galleys.

There was the Venetian Contarino, intrusted with the defence of the Golden Grate.

There was Maurice Cataneo, a soldier of Genoa, commandant of the walls on the landward side between the Golden Gate and the Gate Selimbria.

There were two brothers, gentlemen of Genoa,

Paul Bochiardi and Antonin Troilus Bochiardi, defendants of the Adrianople Gate.

There was Jerome Minotte, Bayle of Venice, charged with safe keeping the walls between the Adrianople Gate and the Cerco Portas.

There was the artillerist, German John Grant, who, with Theodore Carystos, made sure of the Gate Charsias.

There was Leonardo de Langasco, another Genoese, keeper of the Wood Gate.

There was Gabriel Travisan; with four hundred other Venetians, he maintained the stretch of wall on the harbor front between Point Demetrius and the Port St. Peter.

There was Pedro Guiliani, the Spanish Consul, assigned to the guardianship of the wall on the sea side from Point Demetrius to the Port of Julian.

There also was stout Nicholas Gudelli; with the Emperor's brother, he commanded the force in reserve.

Now these, or the major part of them, may have been Free Lances; yet they did not await the motion of Nicholas, the dilatory Pope, and were faithful, and to–day exemplify the saying:

"That men may rise on stepping–stones
Of their dead selves to higher things."

CHAPTER V

COUNT CORTI RECEIVES A FAVOR

"Gracious Princess, the Italian, Count Corti, is at the door. He prays you to hear a request from him."

"Return, Lysander, and bring the Count."

It was early morning, with February in its last days.

The visitor's iron shoes clanked sharply on the marble floor of the reception room, and the absence of everything like ornament in his equipment bespoke preparation for immediate hard service.

"I hope the Mother is keeping you well," she said, presenting her hand to him.

With a fervor somewhat more marked than common, he kissed the white offering, and awaited her bidding.

"My attendants are gone to the chapel, but I will hear you—or will you lend us your presence at the service, and have the audience afterwards?"

"I am in armor, and my steed is at the door, and my men biding at the Adrianople Gate; wherefore, fair Princess, if it be your pleasure, I will present my petition now."

In grave mistrust, she returned:

"God help us, Count! I doubt you have something ill to relate. Since the good Gregory fled into exile to escape his persecutors, but more especially since Cardinal Isidore attempted Latin mass in Sancta Sophia, and the madman Gennadius so frightened the people with his senseless anathemas, **[53]** I have been beset with forebodings until I startle at my own thoughts. It were gentle, did you go to your request at once."

She permitted him to lead her to an armless chair, and, standing before her, he spoke with decision:

"Princess Irene, now that you have resolved finally to remain in the city, and abide the issue of the siege, rightly judging it an affair determinable by God, it is but saying the truth as I see it, that no one is more interested in what betides us from day to day than you; for if Heaven frowns upon our efforts at defence, and there comes an assault, and we are taken, the Conqueror, by a cruel law of war, has at disposal the property both public and private he gains, and every living thing as well. We who fight may die the death he pleases; you—alas, most noble and virtuous lady, my tongue refuses the words that rise to it for utterance!"

The rose tints in her cheeks faded, yet she answered: "I know what you would say, and confess it has appalled me. Sometimes it tempts me to fly while yet I can; then I remember I am a Palaeologus. I remember also my kinsman the Emperor is to be sustained in the trial confronting him. I remember too the other women, high and low, who will stay and share the fortunes of their fighting husbands and brothers. If I have less at stake than they, Count Corti, the demands of honor are more rigorous upon me."

The count's eyes glowed with admiration, but next moment the light in them went out.

"Noble lady," he began, "I hope it will not be judged too great a familiarity to say I have some days been troubled on your account. I have feared you might be too confident of our ability to beat the enemy. It seems my duty to warn you of the real outlook that you may permit us to provide for your safety while opportunities favor."

"For my flight, Count Corti?"

"Nay, Princess Irene, your retirement from the city."

She smiled at the distinction he made, but replied:

"I will hear you, Count."

"It is for you to consider, O Princess—if reports of the Sultan's preparation are true—this assault in one feature at least will be unparalleled. The great guns for which he has been delaying are said to be larger than ever before used against walls. They may destroy our defences at once; they may command all the space within those defences; they may

search every hiding–place; the uncertainties they bring with them are not to be disregarded by the bravest soldier, much less the unresisting classes… In the next place, I think it warrantable from the mass of rumors which has filled the month to believe the city will be assailed by a force much greater than was ever drawn together under her walls. Suffer me to refer to them, O Princess… The Sultan is yet at Adrianople assembling his army. Large bodies of footmen are crossing the Hellespont at Gallipolis and the Bosphorus at Hissar; in the region of Adrianople the country is covered with hordes of horsemen speaking all known tongues and armed with every known weapon—Cossacks from the north, Arabs from the south, Koords and Tartars from the east, Roumanians and Slavs from beyond the Balkans. The roads from the northwest are lined with trains bringing supplies and siege–machinery. The cities along the shores of the Black Sea have yielded to Mahommed; those which defied him are in ruins. An army is devastating Morea. The brother whom His Majesty the Emperor installed ruler there is dead or a wanderer, no man can say in what parts. Assistance cannot be expected from him. Above us, far as the sea, the bays are crowded with ships of all classes; four hundred hostile sail have been counted from the hill–tops. And now that there is no longer a hope of further aid from the Christians of Europe, the effect of the news upon our garrison is dispiriting. Our garrison! Alas, Princess, with the foreigners come to our aid, it is not sufficient to man the walls on the landward side alone."

"The picture is gloomy, Count, but if you have drawn it to shake my purpose, it is not enough. I have put myself in the hands of the Blessed Mother. I shall stay, and be done with as God orders."

Again the Count's face glowed with admiration.

"I thought as much, O Princess," he said warmly; "yet it seemed to me a duty to advise you of the odds against us; and now, the duty done, I pray you hear me as graciously upon another matter… Last night, seeing the need of information of the enemy, I besought His Majesty to allow me to ride toward Adrianople. He consented, and I set out immediately; but

before going, before bidding you adieu, noble Princess and dear lady, I have a prayer to offer you."

He hesitated; then plucking courage from the embarrassment of silence, went on:

"Dear lady, your resolution to stay and face the dangers of the siege and assault fills me with alarm for your safety."

He cast himself upon his knees, and stretched his hands to her.

"Give me permission to protect you. I devote my sword to you, and the skill of my hands—my life, my soul. Let me be your knight."

She arose, but he continued:

"Some day, deeds done for your country and religion may give me courage to speak more boldly of what I feel and hope; but now I dare go no further than ask what you have just heard. Let me be your protector and knight through the perils of the siege at least."

The Princess was pleased with the turn his speech had taken. She thought rapidly. A knight in battle, foremost in the press, her name a conquering cry on his lips were but the constituents of a right womanly ambition. She answered:

"Count Corti, I accept thy offer."

Taking the hand she extended, he kissed it reverently, and said:

"I am happy above other men. Now, O Princess, give me a favor—a glove, a scarf—something I may wear, to prove me thy knight."

She took from her neck a net of knitted silk, pinkish in hue, and large enough for a kerchief or waist sash.

"If I go about this gift," she said, her face deeply suffused, "in a way to provoke a smile hereafter; if in placing it around thy neck with my own hands"—with the words, she bent over him, and dropped the net outside the hood so the ends hung loosely down his breast—"I overstep any rule of modesty, I pray you will not misunderstand me. I am thinking of my country, my kinsman, of religion and God, and the service even unto noble deeds thou mayst do them. Rise, Count Corti. In the ride before thee now, in the perils to come, thou shalt have my prayers."

The Count arose, but afraid to trust himself in further speech, he carried her hand to his lips again, and with a simple farewell, hurried out, and mounting his horse rode at speed for the Adrianople Gate.

Four days after, he reentered the gate, bringing a prisoner, and passing straight to the Very High Residence, made report to the Emperor, Justiniani and Duke Notaras in council.

"I have been greatly concerned for you, Count," said Constantine; "and not merely because a good sword can be poorly spared just now."

The imperial pleasure was unfeigned.

"Your Majesty's grace is full reward for my performance," the Count replied, and rising from the salutation, he began his recital.

"Stay," said the Emperor, "I will have a seat brought that you may be at ease."

Corti declined: "The Arabs have a saying, Your Majesty—'A nest for a setting bird, a saddle for a warrior.' The jaunt has but rested me, and there was barely enough danger in it… The Turk is an old acquaintance. I have lived with him, and been his guest in house and tent, and as a comrade tempted Providence at his side under countless conditions, until I know his speech and usages, himself scarcely better. My African Berbers are all Mohammedans who have performed the Pilgrimage. One of them is a muezzin by profession; and if he can but catch sight of the sun, he will never miss the five hours of prayer. None of them requires telling the direction to Mecca… I issued from Your Majesty's great gate about the third hour, and taking the road to Adrianople, journeyed till near midday before meeting a human being. There were farms and farmhouses on my right and left, and the fields had been planted in good season; but the growing grain was wasted; and when I sought the houses to have speech with their tenants they were forsaken. Twice we were driven off by the stench of bodies rotting before the doors."

"Greeks?"

"Greeks, Your Majesty… There were wild hogs in the thickets which fled at sight of us, and vultures devouring the corpses."

"Were there no other animals, no horses or oxen?" asked Justiniani.

"None, noble Genoese—none seen by us, and the swine were spared, I apprehend, because their meat is prohibited to the children of Islam… At length Hadifah, whom I have raised to be a Sheik—Your Majesty permitting—and whose eyes discover the small things with which space is crowded as he were a falcon making circles up near the sun—Hadifah saw a man in the reeds hiding; and we pursued the wretch, and caught him, and he too was a Greek; and when his fright allowed him to talk, he told us a band of strange people, the like of whom he had never seen, attacked his hut, burned it, carried off his goats and she buffaloes; and since that hour, five weeks gone, he had been hunting for his wife and three girl–children. God be merciful to them! Of the Turks he could tell nothing except that now, everything of value gone, they too had disappeared. I gave the poor man a measure of oaten cakes, and left him to his misery. God be merciful to him also!"

"Did you not advise him to come to me?"

"Your Majesty, he was a husband and father seeking his family; with all humility, what else is there for him to do?"

"I give your judgment credit, Count. There is nothing else."

"I rode on till night, meeting nobody, friend or foe—on through a wide district, lately inhabited, now a wilderness. The creatures of the Sultan had passed through it, and there was fire in their breath. We discovered a dried–up stream, and by sinking in its bed obtained water for our horses. There, in a hollow, we spent the night… Next morning, after an hour's ride, we met a train of carts drawn by oxen. The groaning and creaking of the distraught wheels warned me of the encounter before the advance guard of mounted men, quite a thousand strong, were in view. I did not draw rein"—

"What!" cried Justiniani, astonished. "With but a company of nine?"

The Count smiled.

"I crave your pardon, gallant Captain. In my camp the night before, I prepared my Berbers for the meeting."

"By the bones of the saints, Count Corti, thou dost confuse me the more! With such odds against thee, what preparations were at thy command?"

"'There was never amulet like a grain of wit in a purse under thy cap.' Good Captain, the saying is not worse of having proceeded from a Persian. I told my followers we were likely at any moment to be overtaken by a force too strong for us to fight; but instead of running away, we must meet them heartily, as friends enlisted in the same cause; and if they asked whence we were, we must be sure of agreement in our reply. I was to be a Turk; they, Egyptians from west of the Nile. We had come in by the new fortress opposite the White Castle, and were going to the mighty Lord Mahommed in Adrianople. Beyond that, I bade them be silent, leaving the entertainment of words to me."

The Emperor and Justiniani laughed, but Notaras asked: "If thy Berbers are Mohammedans, as thou sayest, Count Corti, how canst thou rely on them against Mohammedans?"

"My Lord the High Admiral may not have heard of the law by which, if one Arab kills another, the relatives of the dead man are bound to kill him, unless there be composition. So I had merely to remind Hadifah and his companions of the Turks we slew in the field near Basch–Kegan."

Corti continued: "After parley with the captain of the advance guard, I was allowed to ride on; and coming to the train, I found the carts freighted with military engines and tools for digging trenches and fortifying camps. There were hundreds of them, and the drivers were a multitude. Indeed, Your Majesty, from head to foot the caravan was miles in reach, its flanks well guarded by groups of horsemen at convenient intervals."

This statement excited the three counsellors.

"After passing the train," the Count was at length permitted to resume, "my way was through bodies of troops continuously—all irregulars. It must have been about three o'clock in the afternoon when I came upon the most surprising sight. Much I doubt if ever the noble Captain Justiniani, with all his experience, can recall anything like it."

"First there was a great company of pioneers with tools for grading the hills and levelling the road; then on a four–wheeled carriage two men

stood beating a drum; their sticks looked like the enlarged end of a galley oar. The drum responded to their blows in rumbles like dull thunder from distant clouds. While I sat wondering why they beat it, there came up next sixty oxen yoked in pairs. Your Majesty can in fancy measure the space they covered. On the right and left of each yoke strode drivers with sharpened goads, and their yelling harmonized curiously with the thunder of the drum. The straining of the brutes was pitiful to behold. And while I wondered yet more, a log of bronze was drawn toward me big at one end as the trunk of a great plane tree, and so long that thirty carts chained together as one wagon, were required to support it laid lengthwise; and to steady the piece on its rolling bed, two hundred and fifty stout laborers kept pace with it unremittingly watchful. The movement was tedious, but at last I saw"—

"A cannon!" exclaimed the Genoese.

"Yes, noble Captain, the gun said to be the largest ever cast."

"Didst thou see any of the balls?"

"Other carts followed directly loaded with gray limestones chiselled round; and to my inquiry what the stones were for, I was told they were bullets twelve spans in circumference, and that the charge of powder used would cast them a mile."

The inquisitors gazed at each other mutely, and their thoughts may be gathered from the action of the Emperor. He touched a bell on a table, and to Phranza, who answered the call, he said: "Lord Chamberlain, have two men well skilled in the construction of walls report to me in the morning. There is work for them which they must set about at once. I will furnish the money."**[54]**

"I have but little more of importance to engage Your Majesty's attention… Behind the monster cannon, two others somewhat smaller were brought up in the same careful manner. I counted seventeen pieces all brass, the least of them exceeding in workmanship and power the best in the Hippodrome."

"Were there more?" Justiniani asked.

"Many more, brave Captain, but ancient, and unworthy mention… The day was done when, by sharp riding, I gained the rear of the train. At sunrise on the third day, I set out in return… I have a prisoner whom this august council may examine with profit. He will, at least, confirm my report."

"Who is he?"

"The captain of the advance guard."

"How came you by him?"

"Your Majesty, I induced him to ride a little way with me, and at a convenient time gave his bridle rein to Hadifah. In his boyhood the Sheik was trained to leading camels, and he assures me it is much easier to lead a horse."

The sally served to lighten the sombre character of the Count's report, and in the midst of the merriment, he was dismissed. The prisoner was then brought in, and put to question; next day the final preparation for the reception of Mahommed was begun.

With a care equal to the importance of the business, Constantine divided the walls into sections, beginning on the landward side of the Golden Gate or Seven Towers, and ending at the Cynegion. Of the harbor front he made one division, with the Grand Gate of Blacherne and the Acropolis or Point Serail for termini; from Point Serail to the Seven Towers he stationed patrols and lookouts, thinking the sea and rocks sufficient to discourage assault in that quarter.

His next care was the designation of commandants of the several divisions. The individuals thus honored have been already mentioned; though it may be well to add how the Papal Legate, Cardinal Isidore, doffing his frock and donning armor, voluntarily accepted chief direction along the harbor—an example of martial gallantry which ought to have shamed the lukewarm Greeks morosely skulking in their cells.

Shrewdly anticipating a concentration of effort against the Gate St. Romain, and its two auxiliary towers, Bagdad and St. Romain, the

former on the right hand and the latter on the left, he assigned Justiniani to its defence.

Upon the walls, and in the towers numerously garnishing them, the gallant Emperor next brought up his guns and machines, with profuse supplies of missiles.

Then, after flooding the immense ditch, he held a review in the Hippodrome, whence the several detachments marched to their stations.

Riding with his captains, and viewing the walls, now gay with banners and warlike tricking, Constantine took heart, and told how Amurath, the peerless warrior, had dashed his Janissaries against them, and rued the day.

"Is this boy Mahommed greater than his father?" he asked.

"God knows," Isidore responded, crossing himself breast and forehead.

And well content, the cavalcade repassed the ponderous Gate St. Romain. All that could be done had been done. There was nothing more but to wait.

CHAPTER VI

MAHOMMED AT THE GATE ST. ROMAIN

In the city April seemed to have borrowed from the delays of Mahommed; never month so slow in coming. At last, however, its first day, dulled by a sky all clouds, and with winds from the Balkans.

The inertness of the young Sultan was not from want of will or zeal. It took two months to drag his guns from Adrianople; but with them the army moved, and as it moved it took possession, or rather covered the land. At length, he too arrived, bringing, as it were, the month with him; and then he lost no more time.

About five miles from the walls on the south or landward side, he drew his hordes together in the likeness of a line of battle, and at a trumpet call they advanced in three bodies simultaneously. So a tidal wave, far extending, broken, noisy, terrible, rises out of the deep, and rolls upon a shore of stony cliffs.

Near ten o'clock in the forenoon of the sixth of April the Emperor mounted the roof of the tower of St. Romain, mentioned as at the left of the gate bearing the same name. There were with him Justiniani, the Cardinal Isidore, John Grant, Phranza, Theophilus Palaeologus, Duke Notaras, and a number of inferior persons native and foreign. He had come to see all there was to be seen of the Turks going into position.

The day was spring–like, with just enough breeze to blow the mists away.

The reader must think of the roof as an immense platform accessible by means of a wooden stairway in the interior of the tower, and battlemented on the four sides, the merlons of stone in massive blocks, and of a height to protect a tall man, the embrasures requiring banquettes to make them serviceable. In arrangement somewhat like a ship's battery, there are stoutly framed arbalists and mangonels on the platform, and behind them,

with convenient spaces between, arquebuses on tripods, cumbrous catapults, and small cannon on high axles ready for wheeling into position between the merlons. Near each machine its munitions lie in order. Leaning against the walls there are also spears, javelins, and long and cross bows; while over the corner next the gate floats an imperial standard, its white field emblazoned with the immemorial Greek cross in gold. The defenders of the tower are present; and as they are mostly Byzantines, their attitudes betray much more than cold military respect, for they are receiving the Emperor, whom they have been taught to regard worshipfully.

They study him, and take not a little pride in observing that, clad in steel cap–a–pie, he in no wise suffers by comparison with the best of his attendants, not excepting Justiniani, the renowned Genoese captain. Not more to see than be seen, the visor of his helmet is raised; and stealing furtive glances at his countenance, noble by nature, but just now more than ordinarily inspiring, they are better and stronger for what they read in it.

On the right and left the nearest towers obstruct the view of the walls in prolongation; but southward the country spreads before the party a campania rolling and fertile, dotted with trees scattered and in thin groves, and here and there an abandoned house. The tender green of vegetation upon the slopes reminds those long familiar with them that grass is already invading what were lately gardens and cultivated fields. Constantine makes the survey in silence, for he knows how soon even the grass must disappear. Just beyond the flooded ditch at the foot of the first or outward wall is a road, and next beyond the road a cemetery crowded with tombs and tombstones, and brown and white mausolean edifices; indeed, the chronicles run not back to a time when that marginal space was unallotted to the dead. From the far skyline the eyes of the fated Emperor drop to the cemetery, and linger there.

Presently one of his suite calls out: "Hark! What sound is that?"

They all give attention.

"It is thunder."

"No—thunder rolls. This is a beat."

Constantine and Justiniani remembered Count Corti's description of the great drum hauled before the artillery train of the Turks, and the former said calmly:

"They are coming."

Almost as he spoke the sunlight mildly tinting the land in the farness seemed to be troubled, and on the tops of the remote hillocks there appeared to be giants rolling them up, as children roll snow–balls—and the movement was toward the city.

The drum ceased not its beating or coming. Justiniani by virtue of his greater experience, was at length able to say:

"Your Majesty, it is here in front of us; and as this Gate St. Romain marks the centre of your defences, so that drum marks the centre of an advancing line, and regulates the movement from wing to wing."

"It must be so, Captain; for see—there to the left—those are bodies of men."

"And now, Your Majesty, I hear trumpets."

A little later some one cried out:

"Now I hear shouting."

And another: "I see gleams of metal."

Ere long footmen and horsemen were in view, and the Byzantines, brought to the wall by thousands, gazed and listened in nervous wonder; for look where they might over the campania, they saw the enemy closing in upon them, and heard his shouting, and the neighing of horses, the blaring of horns, and the palpitant beating of drums.

"By our Lady of Blacherne," said the Emperor, after a long study of the spectacle, "it is a great multitude, reaching to the sea here on our left, and, from the noise, to the Golden Horn on our right; none the less I am disappointed. I imagined much splendor of harness and shields and banners, but see only blackness and dust. I cannot make out amongst them one Sultanic flag. Tell me, most worthy John Grant—it being reported that thou hast great experience combating with and against these hordes—tell me if this poverty of appearance is usual with them."

The sturdy German, in a jargon difficult to follow, answered: "These at our left are the scum of Asia. They are here because they have nothing; their hope is to better their condition, to return rich, to exchange ragged turbans for crowns, and goatskin jackets for robes of silk. Look, Your Majesty, the tombs in front of us are well kept; to–morrow if there be one left standing, it will have been rifled. Of the lately buried there will not be a ring on a finger or a coin under a tongue. Oh, yes, the ghouls will look better next week! Only give them time to convert the clothes they will strip from the dead into fresh turbans. But when the Janissaries come Your Majesty will not be disappointed. See—their advance guard now—there on the rising ground in front of the gate."

There was a swell of ground to the right of the gate rather than in front of it, and as the party looked thither, a company of horsemen were seen riding slowly but in excellent order, and the sheen of their arms and armor silvered the air about them. Immediately other companies deployed on the right and left of the first one; then the thunderous drum ceased; whereat, from the hordes out on the campania, brought to a sudden standstill, detachments dashed forward at full speed, and dismounting, began digging a trench.

"Be this Sultan like or unlike his father, he is a soldier. He means to cover his army, and at the same time enclose us from sea to harbor. To–morrow, my Lord, only high–flying hawks can communicate with us from the outside."

This, from Justiniani to the Emperor, was scarcely noticed, for behind the deploying Janissaries, there arose an outburst of music in deep volume, the combination of clarions and cymbals so delightful to warriors of the East; at the same instant a yellow flag was displayed. Then old John Grant exclaimed:

"The colors of the *Silihdars!* Mahommed is not far away. Nay, Your Majesty, look—the Sultan himself!"

Through an interval of the guard, a man in chain mail shooting golden sparkles, helmed, and with spear in hand and shield at his back, trotted forth, his steed covered with flowing cloths. Behind him appeared a suite

mixed of soldiers and civilians, the former in warlike panoply, the latter in robes and enormous turbans. Down the slope the foremost rider led as if to knock at the gate. On the tower the cannon were loaded, and run into the embrasures.

"Mahommed, saidst thou, John Grant?"

"Mahommed, Your Majesty."

"Then I call him rash; but as we are not ashamed of our gates and walls, let him have his look in peace… Hear you, men, let him look, and go in peace."

The repetition was in restraint of the eager gunners.

Further remark was cut short by a trumpet sounded at the foot of the tower. An officer peered over the wall, and reported: "Your Majesty, a knight just issued from the gate is riding forth. I take him to be the Italian, Count Corti."

Constantine became a spectator of what ensued.

Ordinarily the roadway from the country was carried over the deep moat in front of the Gate St. Romain by a floor of stout timbers well balustraded at the sides, and resting on brick piers. Of the bridge nothing now remained but a few loose planks side by side ready to be hastily snatched from their places. To pass them afoot was a venture; yet Count Corti, when the Emperor looked at him from the height, was making the crossing mounted, and blowing a trumpet as he went.

"Is the man mad?" asked the Emperor, in deep concern.

"Mad? No, he is challenging the Mahounds to single combat; and, my lords and gentlemen, if he be skilful as he is bold, then, by the Three Kings of Cologne, we will see some pretty work in pattern for the rest of us."

Thus Grant replied.

Corti made the passage safely, and in the road beyond the moat halted, and drove the staff of his banderole firmly in the ground. A broad opening through the cemetery permitted him to see and be seen by the Turks, scarcely a hundred yards away. Standing in his stirrups, he sounded the trumpet again—a clear call ringing with defiance.

Mahommed gave over studying the tower and deep–sunken gate, and presently beckoned to his suite.

"What is the device on yon pennon?" he asked.

"A moon with a cross on its face."

"Say you so?"

Twice the defiance was repeated, and so long the young Sultan, sat still, his countenance unusually grave. He recognized the Count; only he thought of him by the dearer Oriental name, Mirza. He knew also how much more than common ambition there was in the blatant challenge—that it was a reminder of the treaty between them, and, truly interpreted, said, in effect: "Lo, my Lord! she is well, and for fear thou judge me unworthy of her, send thy bravest to try me." And he hesitated—an accident might quench the high soul. Alas, then, for the Princess Irene in the day of final assault! Who would deliver her to him? The hordes, and the machinery, all the mighty preparation, were, in fact, less for conquest and glory than love. Sore the test had there been one in authority to say to him: "She is thine, Lord Mahommed; thine, so thou take her, and leave the city."

A third time the challenge was delivered, and from the walls a taunting cheer descended. Then the son of Isfendiar, recognizing the banderole, and not yet done with chafing over his former defeat, pushed through the throng about Mahommed, and prayed:

"O my Lord, suffer me to punish yon braggart."

Mahommed replied: "Thou hast felt his hand already, but go—I commend thee to thy houris."

He settled in his saddle smiling. The danger was not to the Count.

The arms, armor, weapons, and horse–furniture of the Moslem were identical with the Italian's; and it being for the challenged party to determine with what the duel should be fought, whether with axe, sword, lance or bow, the son of Isfendiar chose the latter, and made ready while advancing. The Count was not slow in imitating him.

Each held his weapon—short for saddle service—in the left hand, the arrow in place, and the shield on the left forearm.

No sooner had they reached the open ground in the cemetery than they commenced moving in circles, careful to keep the enemy on the shield side at a distance of probably twenty paces. The spectators became silent. Besides the skill which masters in such affrays should possess, they were looking for portents of the result.

Three times the foemen encircled each other with shield guard so well kept that neither saw an opening to attack; then the Turk discharged his arrow, intending to lodge it in the shoulder of the other's horse, the buckling attachments of the neck mail being always more or less imperfect. The Count interposed his shield, and shouted in Osmanli: "Out on thee, son of Isfendiar! I am thy antagonist, not my horse. Thou shalt pay for the cowardice."

He then narrowed the circle of his movement, and spurring full speed, compelled the Turk to turn on a pivot so reduced it was almost a halt. The exposure while taking a second shaft from the quiver behind the right shoulder was dangerously increased. "Beware!" the Count cried again, launching his arrow through the face opening of the hood.

The son of Isfendiar might never attain his father's Pachalik. There was not voice left him for a groan. He reeled in his saddle, clutching the empty air, then tumbled to the earth.

The property of the dead man, his steed, arms, and armor, were lawful spoils; but without heeding them, the Count retired to his banderole, and, amidst the shouts of the Greeks on the walls and towers, renewed the challenge. A score of chiefs beset the Sultan for permission to engage the insolent *Gabour*.

To an Arab Sheik, loudest in importunity, he said: "What has happened since yesterday to dissatisfy thee with life?"

The Sheik raised a lance with a flexible shaft twenty feet in length, made of a cane peculiar to the valley of the Jordan, and shaking it stoutly, replied:

"Allah, and the honor of my tribe!"

Perceiving the man's reliance in his weapon, Mahommed returned: "How many times didst thou pray yesterday?"

"Five times, my Lord."

"And to–day?"

"Twice."

"Go, then; but as yon champion hath not a lance to put him on equality with thee, he will be justified in taking to the sword."

The Sheik's steed was of the most precious strain of El–Hejaz; and sitting high in the saddle, a turban of many folds on his head, a striped robe drawn close to the waist, his face thin, coffee–colored, hawk–nosed, and lightning–eyed, he looked a king of the desert. Galloping down on the Christian, he twirled the formidable lance dextrously, until it seemed not more than a stalk of dried papyrus.

The Count beheld in the performance a trick of the *djerid* he had often practised with Mahommed. Uncertain if the man's robe covered armor, he met him with an arrow, and seeing it fall off harmless, tossed the bow on his back, drew sword, and put his horse in forward movement, caracoling right and left to disturb the enemy's aim. Nothing could be more graceful than this action.

Suddenly the Sheik stopped playing, and balancing the lance overhead, point to the foe, rushed with a shrill cry upon him. Corti's friends on the tower held their breath; even the Emperor said: "It is too unequal. God help him!" At the last moment, however—the moment of the thrust—changing his horse to the right, the Count laid himself flat upon its side, under cover of his shield. The thrust, only a little less quick, passed him in the air, and before the Sheik could recover or shorten his weapon, the trained foeman was within its sweep. In a word, the Arab was at mercy. Riding with him side by side, hand on his shoulder, the Count shouted: "Yield thee!"

"Dog of a Christian, never! Do thy worst."

The sword twirled once—a flash—then it descended, severing the lance in front of the owner's grip. The fragment fell to the earth.

"Now yield thee!"

The Sheik drew rein.

"Why dost thou not kill me?"

"I have a message for thy master yonder, the Lord Mahommed."

"Speak it then."

"Tell him he is in range of the cannon on the towers, and only the Emperor's presence there restrains the gunners. There is much need for thee to haste."

"Who art thou?"

"I am an Italian knight who, though thy Lord's enemy, hath reason to love him. Wilt thou go?"

"I will do as thou sayest."

"Alight, then. Thy horse is mine."

"For ransom?"

"No."

The Sheik dismounted grumblingly, and was walking off when the cheering of the Greeks stung him to the soul.

"A chance—O Christian, another chance—to–day—to–morrow!"

"Deliver the message; it shall he as thy Lord may then appoint. Bestir thyself."

The Count led the prize to the banderole, and flinging the reins over it, faced the gleaming line of Janissaries once more, trumpet at mouth. He saw the Sheik salute Mahommed; then the attendants closed around them. "A courteous dog, by the Prophet!" said the Sultan. "In what tongue did he speak?"

"My Lord, he might have been bred under my own tent."

The Sultan's countenance changed.

"Was there not more of his message?"

He was thinking of the Princess Irene.

"Yes, my Lord."

"Repeat it."

"He will fight me again to–day or to–morrow, as my Lord may appoint—and I want my horse. Without him, El–Hejaz will be a widow."

A red spot appeared on Mahommed's forehead.

"Begone!" he cried angrily. "Seest thou not, O fool, that when we take the city we will recover thy horse? Fight thou shalt not, for in that day I shall have need of thee."

Thereupon he bade them open for him, and rode slowly back up the eminence, and when he disappeared Corti was vainly sounding his trumpet.

The two horses were led across the dismantled bridge, and into the gate.

"Heaven hath sent me a good soldier," said the Emperor to the Count, upon descending from the tower.

Then Justiniani asked: "Why didst thou spare thy last antagonist?"

Corti answered truthfully.

"It was well done," the Genoese returned, offering his hand.

"Ay," said Constantine, cordially, "well done. But mount now, and ride with us."

"Your Majesty, a favor first… A man is in the road dead. Let his body be placed on a bier, and carried to his friends."

"A most Christian request! My Lord Chamberlain, attend to it."

The cavalcade betook itself then to other parts, the better to see the disposition of the Turks; and everywhere on the landward side it was the same—troops in masses, and intrenchments in progress. Closing the inspection at set of sun, the Emperor beheld the sea and the Bosphorus in front of the Golden Horn covered with hundreds of sails.

"The leaguer is perfected," said the Genoese.

"And the issue with God," Constantine replied. "Let us to Hagia St. Sophia."

CHAPTER VII

THE GREAT GUN SPEAKS

The first sufficient gleam of light next morning revealed to the watchmen on the towers an ominous spectacle. Through the night they had heard a medley of noises peculiar to a multitude at work with all their might; now, just out of range of their own guns, they beheld a continuous rampart of fresh earth grotesquely spotted with marbles from the cemetery.

In no previous siege of the Byzantine capital was there reference to such a preliminary step. To the newly enlisted, viewing for the first time an enemy bodily present, it seemed like the world being pared down to the smallest dimensions; while their associate veterans, to whom they naturally turned for comfort, admitted an appreciable respect for the Sultan. Either he had a wise adviser, they said, or he was himself a genius.

Noon—and still the workmen seemed inexhaustible—still the rampart grew in height—still the hordes out on the campania multiplied, and the horizon line west of the Gate St. Romain was lost in the increasing smoke of a vast bivouac.

Nightfall—and still the labor.

About midnight, judging by the sounds, the sentinels fancied the enemy approached nearer the walls; and they were not mistaken. With the advent of the second morning, here and there at intervals, ill–defined mounds of earth were seen so much in advance of the intrenched line that, by a general order, a fire of stones and darts was opened upon them; and straightway bodies of bowmen and slingers rushed forward, and returned the fire, seeking to cover the mound builders. This was battle.

Noon again—and battle.

In the evening—battle.

The advantage of course was with the besieged.

The work on the mounds meanwhile continued, while the campania behind the intrenchment was alive with a creaking of wheels burdened by machinery, and a shouting of ox–drivers; and the veterans on the walls said the enemy was bringing up his balistas and mangonels.

The third morning showed the mounds finished, and crowned with mantelets, behind which, in working order and well manned, every sort of engine known in sieges from Alexander to the Crusaders was in operation. Thenceforward, it is to be observed, the battle was by no means one–sided.

In this opening there was no heat or furore of combat; it was rather the action of novices trying their machines, or, in modern artillery parlance, finding the range. Many minutes often intervened between shots, and as the preliminary object on the part of the besiegers was to destroy the merlons sheltering the warders, did a stone strike either wall near the top, the crash was saluted by cheers.

Now the foreigners defending were professionals who had graduated in all the arts of town and castle taking. These met the successes of their antagonists with derision. "Apprentices," they would say, "nothing but apprentices."… "See those fellows by the big springal there turning the winch the wrong way!"… "The turbaned sons of Satan! Have they no eyes? I'll give them a lesson. Look!" And if the bolt fell truly, there was loud laughter on the walls.

The captains, moreover, were incessantly encouraging the raw men under them. "Two walls, and a hundred feet of flooded ditch! There will be merry Christmas in the next century before the Mahounds get to us at the rate they are coming. Shoot leisurely, men—leisurely. An infidel for every bolt!"

Now on the outer wall, which was the lower of the two, and naturally first to draw the enemy's ire, and then along the inner, the Emperor went, indifferent to danger or fatigue, and always with words of cheer.

"The stones under our feet are honest," he would say. "The Persian came thinking to batter them down, but after many days he fled; and search as we will, no man can lay a finger on the face of one of them, and say, 'Here Chosroes left a scar.' So Amurath, sometimes called Murad, this young

man's father, wasted months, and the souls of his subjects without count; but when he fled not a coping block had been disturbed in its bed. What has been will be again. God is with us."

When the three days were spent, the Greeks under arms began to be accustomed to the usage, and make merry of it, like the veterans.

The fourth day about noon the Emperor, returning from a round of the walls, ascended the Bagdad tower mentioned as overlooking the Gate St. Romain on the right hand; and finding Justiniani on the roof, he said to him: "This fighting, if it may be so called, Captain, is without heart. But two of our people have been killed; not a stone is shaken. To me it seems the Sultan is amusing us while preparing something more serious."

"Your Majesty," the Genoese returned, soberly, "now has Heaven given you the spirit of a soldier and the eyes as well. Old John Grant told me within an hour that the yellow flag on the rising ground before us denotes the Sultan's quarters in the field, and is not to be confounded with his battle flag. It follows, I think, could we get behind the Janissaries dismounted on the further slope of the rise, yet in position to meet a sally, we would discover the royal tent not unwisely pitched, if, as I surmise, this gate is indeed his point of main attack. And besides here are none of the old–time machines as elsewhere along our front; not a catapult, or bricole, or bible—as some, with wicked facetiousness, have named a certain invention for casting huge stones; nor have we yet heard the report of a cannon, or arquebus, or bombard, although we know the enemy has them in numbers. Wherefore, keeping in mind the circumstance of his presence here, the omissions satisfy me the Sultan relies on his great guns, and that, while amusing us, as Your Majesty has said, he is mounting them. To–morrow, or perhaps next day, he will open with them, and then"—

"What then?" Constantine asked.

"The world will have a new lesson in warfare."

The Emperor's countenance, visible under his raised visor, knit hard.

"Dear, dear God!" he said, half to himself. "If this old Christian empire should be lost through folly of mine, who will there be to forgive me if not Thou?"

Then, seeing the Genoese observing him with surprise, he continued:

"It is a simple tale, Captain… A Dacian, calling himself Urban, asked audience of me one day, and being admitted, said he was an artificer of cannon; that he had plied his art in the foundries of Germany, and from study of powder was convinced of the practicality of applying it to guns of heavier calibre than any in use. He had discovered a composition of metals, he said, which was his secret, and capable, when properly cast, of an immeasurable strain. Would I furnish him the materials, and a place, with appliances for the work such as he would name, I might collect the machines in my arsenal, and burn them or throw them into the sea. I might even level my walls, and in their stead throw up ramparts of common earth, and by mounting his guns upon them secure my capital against the combined powers of the world. He refused to give me details of his processes. I asked him what reward he wanted, and he set it so high I laughed. Thinking to sound him further, I kept him in my service a few days; but becoming weary of his importunities, I dismissed him. I next heard of him at Adrianople. The Sultan Mahommed entertained his propositions, built him a foundry, and tried one of his guns, with results the fame of which is a wonder to the whole East. It was the log of bronze Count Corti saw on the road—now it is here—and Heaven sent it to me first."

"Your Majesty," returned the Genoese, impressed by the circumstance, and the evident remorse of the Emperor, "Heaven does not hold us accountable for errors of judgment. There is not a monarch in Europe who would have accepted the man's terms, and it remains to be seen if Mahommed, as yet but a callow youth, has not been cheated. But look yonder!"

As he spoke, the Janissaries in front of the gate mounted and rode forward, probably a hundred yards, pursued by a riotous shouting and cracking of whips. Presently a train of buffaloes, yoked and tugging laboriously at something almost too heavy for them, appeared on the swell of earth; and there was a driver for every yoke, and every driver whirled a long stick with a longer lash fixed to it, and howled lustily.

"It is the great gun," said Constantine. "They are putting it in position."

Justiniani spoke to the men standing by the machines: "Make ready bolt and stone."

The balistiers took to their wheels eagerly, and discharged a shower of missiles at the Janissaries and ox–drivers.

"Too short, my men—more range."

The elevation was increased; still the bolts fell short.

"Bring forward the guns!" shouted Justiniani.

The guns were small bell–mouthed barrels of hooped iron, muzzle loading, mounted on high wheels, and each shooting half a dozen balls of lead large as walnuts. They were carefully aimed. The shot whistled and sang viciously.

"Higher, men!" shouted the Genoese, from a merlon. "Give the pieces their utmost range."

The Janissaries replied with a yell. The second volley also failed. Then Justiniani descended from his perch.

"Your Majesty," he said, "to stop the planting of the gun there is nothing for us but a sally."

"We are few, they are many," was the thoughtful reply. "One of us on the wall is worth a score of them in the field. Their gun is an experiment. Let them try it first."

The Genoese replied: "Your Majesty is right."

The Turks toiled on, backing and shifting their belabored trains, until the monster at last threatened the city with its great black Cyclopean eye.

"The Dacian is not a bad engineer," said the Emperor.

"See, he is planting other pieces."

Thus Justiniani; for oxen in trains similar to the first one came up tugging mightily, until by mid–afternoon on each flank of the first monster three other glistening yellow logs lay on their carriages in a like dubious quiet, leaving no doubt that St. Romain was to be overwhelmed, if the new agencies answered expectations.

If there was anxiety here, over the way there was impatience too fierce for control. Urban, the Dacian, in superintendency of the preparation, was naturally disposed to be careful, so much, in his view, depended on the right placement of the guns; but Mahommed, on foot, and whip in hand, was intolerant, and, not scrupling to mix with the workmen, urged them vehemently, now with threats, now with promises of reward.

"Thy beasts are snails! Give me the goad," he cried, snatching one from a driver. Then to Urban: "Bring the powder, and a bullet, for when the sun goes down thou shalt fire the great gun. Demur not. By the sword of Solomon, there shall be no sleep this night in yon *Gabour* city, least of all in the palace they call Blacherne."

The Dacian brought his experts together. The powder in a bag was rammed home; with the help of a stout slab, a stone ball was next rolled into the muzzle, then pushed nakedly down on the bag. Of a truth there was need of measureless strength in the composition of the piece. Finally the vent was primed, and a slow–match applied, after which Urban reported:

"The gun is ready, my Lord."

"Then watch the sun, and—*Bismillah!*—at its going down, fire… Aim at the gate—this one before us—and if thou hit it or a tower on either hand, I will make thee a *begler–bey*."

The gun–planting continued. Finally the sun paused in cloudy splendor ready to carry the day down with it. The Sultan, from his tent of many annexes Bedouin fashion, walked to where Urban and his assistants stood by the carriage of the larger piece.

"Fire!" he said.

Urban knelt before him.

"Will my Lord please retire?"

"Why should I retire?"

"There is danger."

Mahommed smiled haughtily.

"Is the piece trained on the gate?"

"It is; but I pray"—

"Now if thou wilt not have me believe thee a dog not less than an unbeliever, rise, and do my bidding."

The Dacian, without more ado, put the loose end of the slow–match into a pot of live coals near by, and when it began to spit and sputter, he cast it off. His experts fled. Only Mahommed remained with him; and no feat of daring in battle could have won the young Padishah a name for courage comparable to that the thousands looking on from a safe distance now gave him.

"Will my Lord walk with me a little aside? He can then see the ball going."

Mahommed accepted the suggestion.

"Look now in a line with the gate, my Lord."

The match was at last spent. A flash at the vent—a spreading white cloud—a rending of the air—the rattle of wheels obedient to the recoil of the gun—a sound thunder in volume, but with a crackle sharper than any thunder—and we may almost say that, with a new voice, and an additional terror, war underwent a second birth.

Mahommed's ears endured a wrench, and for a time he heard nothing; but he was too intent following the flight of the ball to mind whether the report of the gun died on the heights of Galata or across the Bosphorus at Scutari. He saw the blackened sphere pass between the towers flanking the gate, and speed on into the city—how far, or with what effect, he could not tell, nor did he care.

Urban fell on his knees.

"Mercy, my Lord, mercy!"

"For what? That thou didst not hit the gate? Rise, man, and see if the gun is safe." And when it was so reported, he called to Kalil, the Vizier, now come up: "Give the man a purse, and not a lean one, for, by Allah! he is bringing Constantinople to me."

And despite the ringing in his ears, he went to his tent confident and happy. On the tower meantime Constantine and the Genoese beheld the

smoke leap forth and curtain the gun, and right afterward they heard the huge ball go tearing past them, like an invisible meteor. Their eyes pursued the sound—where the missile fell they could not say—they heard a crash, as if a house midway the city had been struck—then they gazed at each other, and crossed themselves.

"There is nothing for us now but the sally," said the Emperor.

"Nothing," replied Justiniani. "We must disable the guns."

"Let us go and arrange it."

There being no indication of further firing, the two descended from the tower.

The plan of sortie agreed upon was not without ingenuity. The gate under the palace of Blacherne called *Cercoporta* was to be opened in the night. **[55]** Count Corti, with the body–guard mounted, was to pass out by it, and surprise the Janissaries defending the battery. Simultaneously Justiniani should sally by the Gate St. Romain, cross the moat temporarily bridged for the purpose, and, with the footmen composing the force in reserve, throw himself upon the guns.

The scheme was faithfully attempted. The Count, stealing out of the ancient exit in the uncertain light preceding the dawn, gained a position unobserved, and charged the careless Turks. By this time it had become a general report that the net about his neck was a favor of the Princess Irene, and his battle cry confirmed it—*For God and Irene!* Bursting through the half–formed opposition, he passed to the rear of the guns, and planted his banderole at the door of Mahommed's tent. Had his men held together, he might have returned with a royal prisoner.

While attention was thus wholly given the Count, Justiniani overthrew the guns by demolishing the carriages. A better acquaintance with the operation known to moderns as "spiking a piece," would have enabled him to make the blow irreparable. The loss of Janissaries was severe; that of the besieged trifling. The latter, foot and horse, returned by the Gate St. Romain unpursued.

Mahommed, aroused by the tumult, threw on his light armor, and rushed out in time to hear the cry of his assailant, and pluck the banderole from its place. At sight of the moon with the cross on its face, his wrath was uncontrollable. The Aga in command and all his assistants were relentlessly impaled.

There were other sorties in course of the siege, but never another surprise.

CHAPTER VIII

MAHOMMED TRIES HIS GUNS AGAIN

Hardly had the bodies making the sortie retired within the gate when the Janissaries on the eminence were trebly strengthened, and the noises in that quarter, the cracking of whips, the shouting of ox–drivers, the hammering betokened a prodigious activity. The besieged, under delusion that the guns had been destroyed, could not understand the enemy. Not until the second ensuing morning was the mystery solved. The watchmen on the towers, straining to pierce the early light, then beheld the great bronze monster remounted and gaping at them through an embrasure, and other monsters of a like kind on either side of it, fourteen in all, similarly mounted and defended.

The warders on the towers, in high excitement, sent for Justiniani, and he in turn despatched a messenger to the Emperor. Together on the Bagdad tower the two discussed the outlook.

"Your Majesty," said the Genoese, much chagrined, "the apostate Dacian must be master of his art. He has restored the cannon I overthrew."

After a time Constantine replied: "I fear we have underrated the new Sultan. Great as a father may be, it is possible for a son to be greater."

Perceiving the Emperor was again repenting the dismissal of Urban, the Captain held his peace until asked: "What shall we now do?"

"Your Majesty," he returned, "it is apparent our sally was a failure. We slew a number of the infidels, and put their master—may God confound him!—to inconvenience, and nothing more. Now he is on guard, we may not repeat our attempt. My judgment is that we let him try his armament upon our walls. They may withstand his utmost effort."

The patience this required was not put to a long test. There was a sudden clamor of trumpets, and the Janissaries, taking to their saddles, and

breaking right and left into divisions, cleared the battery front. Immediately a vast volume of smoke hid the whole ground, followed by a series of explosions. Some balls passing over the defences ploughed into the city; and as definitions of force, the sounds they made in going were awful; yet they were the least of the terrors. Both the towers were hit, and they shook as if an earthquake were wrestling with them. The air whitened with dust and fragments of crushed stone. The men at the machines and culverins cowered to the floor. Constantine and the Genoese gazed at each other until the latter bethought him, and ordered the fire returned. And it was well done, for there is nothing which shall bring men round from fright like action.

Then, before there could be an exchange of opinion between the high parties on the tower, a man in half armor issued from the slowly rising cloud, and walked leisurely forward. Instead of weapons, he carried an armful of stakes, and something which had the appearance of a heavy gavel. After a careful examination of the ground to the gate, he halted and drove a stake, and from that point commenced zigzagging down the slope, marking each angle.

Justiniani drew nearer the Emperor, and said, in a low voice: "With new agencies come new methods. The assault is deferred."

"Nay, Captain, our enemy must attack; otherwise he cannot make the moat passable."

"That, Your Majesty, was the practice. Now he will gain the ditch by a trench."

"With what object?"

"Under cover of the trench, he will fill the ditch."

Constantine viewed the operation with increased gravity. He could see how feasible it was to dig a covered way under fire of the guns, making the approach and the bombardment simultaneous; and he would have replied, but that instant a mob of laborers—so the spades and picks they bore bespoke them—poured from the embrasure of the larger gun, and, distributing themselves at easy working intervals along the staked line,

began throwing up the earth on the side next the city. Officers with whips accompanied and stood over them.

The engineer—if we may apply the modern term—was at length under fire of the besieged; still he kept on; only when he exhausted his supply of stakes did he retire, leaving it inferrible that the trench was to run through the opening in the cemetery to the bridge way before the gate.

At noon, the laborers being well sunk in the ground, the cannon again vomited fire and smoke, and with thunderous reports launched their heavy bullets at the towers. Again the ancient piles shook from top to base. Some of the balistiers were thrown down. The Emperor staggered under the shock. One ball struck a few feet below a merlon of the Bagdad, and when the dust blew away, an ugly crack was seen in the exposed face of the wall, extending below the roof.

While the inspection of damages immediately ordered is in progress, we take the liberty of transporting the reader elsewhere, that he may see the effect of this amazing warfare on other parties of interest in the tragedy.

Count Corti was with his guard at the foot of the tower when the first discharge of artillery took place. He heard the loud reports and the blows of the shot which failed not their aim; he heard also the sound of the bullets flying on into the city, and being of a quick imagination, shuddered to think of the havoc they might inflict should they fall in a thickly inhabited district. Then it came to him that the residence of the Princess Irene must be exposed to the danger. Like a Christian and a lover, he, sought to allay the chill he felt by signing the cross repeatedly, and with unction, on brow and breast. The pious performance brought no relief. His dread increased. Finally he sent a man with a message informing the Emperor that he was gone to see what damage the guns had done in the city.

He had not ridden far when he was made aware of the prevalence of an extraordinary excitement. It seemed the entire population had been brought from their houses by the strange thunder, and the appalling flight of meteoric bodies over their roofs. Men and women were running about asking each other what had happened. At the corners he was appealed to:

"Oh, for Christ's sake, stop, and tell us if the world is coming to an end!" Arid in pity lie answered: "Do not be so afraid, good people. It is the Turks. They are trying to scare us by making a great noise. Go back into your houses."

"But the bullets which passed over us. What of them?"

"Where did they strike?"

"On further. God help the sufferers!"

One cry he heard so often it made an impression upon him:

"The *Panagia!* Tell His Majesty, as he is a Christian, to bring the Blessed Madonna from the Chapel."

With each leap of his horse he was now nearing the alighting places of the missiles, and naturally the multiplying signs of terror he observed, together with a growing assurance that the abode of the Princess was in the range of danger, quickened his alarm for her. The white faces of the women he met and passed without a word reminded him the more that she was subject to the same peril, and in thought of her he forgot to sympathize with them.

In Byzantium one might be near a given point yet far away; so did the streets run up and down, and here and there, their eccentricities in width and direction proving how much more accident and whim had to do with them originally than art or science. Knowing this, the Count was not sparing of his horse, and as his blood heated so did his fancy. If the fair Princess were unhurt, it was scarcely possible she had escaped the universal terror. He imagined her the object of tearful attention from her attendants. Or perhaps they had run away, and left her in keeping of the tender Madonna of Blacherne.

At last he reached a quarter where the throng of people compelled him to slacken his gait, then halt and dismount. It was but a few doors from the Princess'. One house—a frame, two stories—appeared the object of interest.

"What has happened?" he asked, addressing a tall man, who stood trembling and praying to a crucifix in his hand.

"God protect us, Sir Knight! See how clear the sky is, but a great stone—some say it was a meteor—struck this house. There is the hole it made. Others say it was a bullet from the Turks.—Save us, O Son of Mary!" and he fell to kissing the crucifix.

"Was anybody hurt?" the Count asked, shaking the devotee.

"Yes—two women and a child were killed.—Save us, O Son of God! Thou hast the power from the Father."

The Count picked his way toward the house till he could get no further, so was it blocked by a mass of women on their knees, crying, praying, and in agony of fright. There, sure enough, was a front beaten in, exposing the wrecked interior. But who was the young woman at the door calmly directing some men bringing out the body of one apparently dead? Her back was to him, but the sunlight was tangled in her uncovered hair, making gold of it. Her figure was tall and slender, and there was a marvellous grace in her action. Who was she? The Count's heart was prophetic. He gave the bridle rein to a man near by, and holding his sword up, pushed through the kneeling mass. He might have been more considerate in going; but he was in haste, and never paused until at the woman's side. "God's mercy, Princess Irene!" he cried, "what dost thou here? Are there not men to take this charge upon them?"

And in his joy at finding her safe, he fell upon his knees, and, without waiting for her to offer the favor, took one of her hands, and carried it to his lips.

"Nay, Count Corti, is it not for me to ask what thou dost here?"

Her face was solemn, and he could hardly determine if the eyes she turned to him were not chiding; yet they were full of humid violet light, and she permitted him to keep the hand while he replied:

"The Turk is for the time having his own way. We cannot get to him… I came in haste to—to see what his guns have done—or—why should I not say it? Princess, I galloped here fearing thou wert in need of protection and help. I remembered that I was thy accepted knight."

She understood him perfectly, and, withdrawing her hand, returned: "Rise, Count Corti, thou art in the way of these bearing the dead."

He stood aside, and the men passed him with their burden—a woman drenched in blood.

"Is this the last one?" she asked them.

"We could find no other."

"Poor creature!… Yet God's will be done!… Bear her to my house, and lay her with the others." Then to the Count she said: "Come with me."

The Princess set out after the men. Immediately the women about raised a loud lamentation; such as were nearest her cried out: "Blessings on you!" and they kissed the hem of her gown, and followed her moaning and weeping. The body was borne into the house, and to the chapel, and all who wished went in. Before the altar, two others were lying lifeless on improvised biers, an elderly woman and a half–grown girl. The Lady in picture above the altar looked down on them, as did the Holy Child in her arms; and there was much comfort to the spectators in the look. Then, when the third victim was decently laid out, Sergius began the service for the dead. The Count stood by the Princess, her attendants in group a little removed from them.

In the midst of the holy ministration, a sound like distant rolling thunder penetrated the chapel. Every one present knew what it was by this time—knew at least it was not thunder—and they cried out, and clasped each other—from their knees many fell grovelling on the floor. Sergius' voice never wavered. Corti would have extended his arms to give the Princess support; but she did not so much as change color; her hands holding a silver triptych remained firm. The deadly bullets were in the air and might alight on the house; yet her mind was too steadfast, her soul too high, her faith too exalted for alarm; and if the Count had been prone to love her for her graces of person, now he was prompted to adore her for her courage.

Outside near by, there was a crash as of a flying solid smiting another dwelling, and, without perceptible interval, an outcry so shrill and unintermitted it required no explanation.

The Princess was the first to speak.

"Proceed, Sergius," she said; nor might one familiar with her voice have perceived any alteration in it from the ordinary; then to the Count again: "Let us go out; there may be others needing my care."

At the door Corti said: "Stay, O Princess—a word, I pray."

She had only to look at his face to discover he was the subject of a fierce conflict of spirit.

"Have pity on me, I conjure you. Honor and duty call me to the gate; the Emperor may be calling me; but how can I go, leaving you in the midst of such peril and horrors?"

"What would you have me do?"

"Fly to a place of safety."

"Where?"

"I will find a place; if not within these walls, then"—

He stopped, and his eyes, bright with passion, fell before hers; for the idea he was about giving his tongue would be a doubly dishonorable coinage, since it included desertion of the beleaguered city, and violation of his compact with Mahommed.

"And then?" she asked.

And love got the better of honor.

"I have a ship in the harbor, O Princess Irene, and a crew devoted to me, and I will place you on its deck, and fly with you. Doubt not my making the sea; there are not Christians and Mohammedans enough to stay me once my anchor is lifted, and my oars out; and on the sea freedom lives, and we will follow the stars to Italy, and find a home."

Again he stopped, his face this time wrung with sudden anguish; then he continued:

"God forgive, and deal with me mercifully! I am mad!… And thou, O Princess—do thou forgive me also, and my words and weakness. Oh, if not for my sake, then for that which carried me away! Or if thou canst not forget, pity me, pity me, and think of the wretchedness now my portion. I

had thy respect, if not thy love; now both are lost—gone after my honor. Oh! I am most miserable—miserable!"

And wringing his hands, he turned his face from her.

"Count Corti," she replied gently, "thou hast saved thyself. Let the affair rest here. I forgive the proposal, and shall never remind thee of it. Love is madness. Return to duty; and for me"—she hesitated—"I hold myself ready for the sacrifice to which I was born. God is fashioning it; in His own time, and in the form He chooses, He will send it to me… I am not afraid, and be thou not afraid for me. My father was a hero, and he left me his spirit. I too have my duty born within the hour—it is to share the danger of my kinsman's people, to give them my presence, to comfort them all I can. I will show thee what thou seemest not to have credited—that a woman can be brave as any man. I will attend the sick, the wounded, and suffering. To the dying I will carry such consolation as I possess—all of them I can reach—and the dead shall have ministration. My goods and values have long been held for the poor and unfortunate; now to the same service I consecrate myself, my house, my chapel, and altar… There is my hand in sign of forgiveness, and that I believe thee a true knight. I will go with thee to thy horse."

He bowed his head, and silently struggling for composure, carried the hand to his lips.

"Let us go now," she said.

They went out together.

Another dwelling had been struck; fortunately it was unoccupied.

In the saddle, he stayed to say: "Thy soul, O Princess Irene, is angelic as thy face. Thou hast devoted thyself to the suffering. Am I left out? What word wilt thou give me?"

"Be the true knight thou art, Count Corti, and come to me as before."

He rode away with a revelation; that in womanly purity and goodness there is a power and inspiration beyond the claims of beauty.

The firing continued. Seven times that day the Turks assailed the Gate St. Romain with their guns; and while a few of the stones discharged flew

amiss into the city, there were enough to still further terrorize the inhabitants. By night all who could had retreated to vaults, cellars, and such hiding–places as were safe, and took up their abodes in them. In the city but one woman went abroad without fear, and she bore bread and medicines, and dressed wounds, and assuaged sorrows, and as a Madonna in fact divided worship with the Madonna in the chapel up by the High Residence. Whereat Count Corti's love grew apace, though the recollection of the near fall he had kept him humble and circumspect.

The same day, but after the second discharge of the guns, Mahommed entered the part of his tent which, with some freedom, may be termed his office and reception–room, since it was furnished with seats and a large table, the latter set upon a heavily tufted rug, and littered over with maps and writing and drawing materials. Notable amongst the litter was the sword of Solomon. Near it lay a pair of steel gauntlets elegantly gilt. One stout centre–tree, the main support of the roof of camel's hair, appeared gayly dressed with lances, shields, arms, and armor; and against it, strange to say, the companion of a bright red battle–flag, leant the banderole Count Corti had planted before the door the morning of the sally. A sliding flap overhead, managed by cords in the interior, was drawn up, admitting light and air.

The office, it may be added, communicated by gay portieres with four other apartments, each having its separate centre–tree; one occupied by Kalil, the Vizier; one, a bed–chamber, so to speak; one, a stable for the imperial stud; the fourth belonged to no less a person than our ancient and mysterious acquaintance, the Prince of India.

Mahommed was in half–armor; that is, his neck, arms, and body were in chain mail, the lightest and most flexible of the East, exquisitely gold–washed, and as respects fashion exactly like the suit habitually affected by Count Corti. His nether limbs were clad in wide trousers of yellow silk, drawn close at the ankles. Pointed shoes of red leather completed his equipment, unless we may include a whip with heavy handle and long lash. Could Constantine have seen him at the moment, he would have

recognized the engineer whose performance in tracing the trench he had witnessed with so much interest in the morning.

The Grand Chamberlain received him with the usual prostration, and in that posture waited his pleasure.

"Bring me water. I am thirsty."

The water was brought.

"The Prince of India now."

Presently the Prince appeared in the costume peculiar to him—a cap and gown of black velvet, loose trousers, and slippers. His hair and beard were longer than when we knew him a denizen of Constantinople, making his figure seem more spare and old; otherwise he was unchanged. He too prostrated himself; yet as he sank upon his knees, he gave the Sultan a quick glance, intended doubtless to discover his temper more than his purpose.

"You may retire."

This to the Chamberlain.

Upon the disappearance of the official, Mahommed addressed the Prince, his countenance flushed, his eyes actually sparkling.

"God is great. All things are possible to him. Who shall say no when he says yes? Who resist when he bids strike? Salute me, and rejoice with me, O Prince. He is on my side. It was he who spoke in the thunder of my guns. Salute me, and rejoice. Constantinople is mine! The towers which have outlasted the ages, the walls which have mocked so many conquerors—behold them tottering to their fall! I will make dust of them. The city which has been a stumbling–block to the true faith shall be converted in a night. Of the churches I will make mosques. Salute me and rejoice! How may a soul contain itself knowing God has chosen it for such mighty things? Rise, O Prince and rejoice with me!"

He caught up the sword of Solomon, and in a kind of ecstasy strode about flourishing it.

The Prince, arisen, replied simply: "I rejoice with my Lord;" and folding his arms across his breast, he waited, knowing he had been summoned for

something more serious than to witness an outburst so wild—that directly this froth would disappear, as bubbles vanish from wine just poured. The most absolute of men have their ways—this was one of Mahommed's. And behind his composed countenance the Jew smiled, for, as he read it, the byplay was an acknowledgment of his influence over the chosen of God.

And he was right. Suddenly Mahommed replaced the sword, and standing before him, asked abruptly:

"Tell me, have the stars fixed the day when I may assault the Gabours?"

"They have, my Lord."

"Give it to me."

The Prince returned to his apartment, and came back with a horoscope.

"This is their decision, my Lord."

In his character of Messenger of the Stars, the Prince of India dispensed with every observance implying inferiority.

Without looking at the Signs, or at the planets in their Houses; without noticing the calculations accompanying the chart; glancing merely at the date in the central place, Mahommed frowned, and said:

"The twenty–ninth of May! Fifty–three days! By Allah and Mahomet arid Christ—all in one—if by the compound the oath will derive an extra virtue—what is there to consume so much time? In three days I will have the towers lording this gate they call St. Romain in the ditch, and the ditch filled. In three days, I say."

"Perhaps my Lord is too sanguine—perhaps he does not sufficiently credit the skill and resources of the enemy behind the gate—perhaps there is more to do than he has admitted into his anticipations."

Mahommed darted a look at the speaker.

"Perhaps the stars have been confidential with their messenger, and told him some of the things wanting to be done."

"Yes, my Lord." The calmness of the Prince astonished Mahommed.

"And art thou permitted to be confidential with me?" he asked.

"My Lord must break up this collection of his guns, and plant some of them against the other gates; say two at the Golden Gate, one at the Caligaria, and before the Selimbria and the Adrianople two each. He will have seven left… Nor must my Lord confine his attack to the landward side; the weakest front of the city is the harbor front, and it must be subjected. He should carry there at least two of his guns."

"Sword of Solomon!" cried Mahommed. "Will the stars show me a road to possession of the harbor? Will they break the chain which defends its entrance? Will they sink or burn the enemy's fleet?"

"No; those are heroisms left for my Lord's endeavor."

"Thou dost taunt me with the impossible."

The Prince smiled.

"Is my Lord less able than the Crusaders? I know he is not too proud to be taught by them. Once, marching upon the Holy City, they laid siege to Nicea, and after a time discovered they could not master it without first mastering Lake Ascanius. Thereupon they hauled their ships three leagues overland, and launched them in the lake."**[56]**

Mahommed became thoughtful.

"If my Lord does not distribute the guns; if he confines his attack to St. Romain, the enemy, in the day of assault, can meet him at the breach with his whole garrison. More serious, if the harbor is left to the Greeks, how can he prevent the Genoese in Galata from succoring them? My Lord derives information from those treacherous people in the day; does he know of the intercourse between the towns by boats in the night? If they betray one side, will they be true to the other? My Lord, they are Christians; so are these with whom we are at war."

The Sultan sank into a seat; and satisfied with the impression he had made, the Prince wisely allowed him his thoughts.

"It is enough!" said the former, rising. Then fixing his eye on his confederate, he asked: "What stars told thee these things, O Prince?"

"My Lord, the firmament above is God's, and the sun and planets there are his mercifully to our common use. But we have each of us a firmament

of our own. In mine, Reason is the sun, and of its stars I mention two—Experience and Faith. By the light of the three, I succeed; when I refuse them, one or all, I surrender to chance."

Mahommed caught up the sword, and played with its ruby handle, turning it at angles to catch its radiations; at length he said:

"Prince of India, thou hast spoken like a Prophet. Go call Kalil and Saganos."

CHAPTER IX

THE MADONNA TO THE RESCUE

We have given the opening of the siege of Byzantium by Mahommed with dangerous minuteness, the danger of course being from the critic. We have posted the warders on their walls, and over against them set the enemy in an intrenched line covering the whole landward side of the city. We have planted Mahommed's guns, and exhibited their power, making it a certainty that a breach in the wall must be sooner or later accomplished. We have shown the effect of the fire of the guns, not only on the towers abutting the gate which was the main object of attack, but on the non–combatants, the women and children, in their terror seeking safety in cellars, vaults, and accessible underground retreats. We have carefully assembled and grouped those of our characters who have survived to this trying time; and the reader is informed where they are, the side with which their fortunes are cast, their present relations to each other, and the conditions which environ them. In a word, the reader knows their several fates are upon them, and the favors we now most earnestly pray are to be permitted to pass the daily occurrences of the siege, and advance quickly to the end. Even battles can become monotonous in narrative.

The Sultan, we remark, adopted the suggestions of the Prince of India. He distributed his guns, planting some of them in front of the several gates of the city. To control the harbor, he, in modern parlance, erected a battery on a hill by Galata; then in a night, he drew a part of his fleet, including a number of his largest vessels, from Besich–tasch on the Bosphorus over the heights and hollows of Pera, a distance of about two leagues, and dropped them in the Golden Horn. These Constantine attacked. Justiniani led the enterprise, but was repulsed. A stone bullet sunk his ship, and he barely escaped with his life. Most of his companions were drowned; those taken were pitilessly hung. Mahommed next collected great earthen jars—

their like may yet be seen in the East—and, after making them air–tight, laid a bridge upon them out toward the single wall defending the harbor front. At the further end of this unique approach he placed a large gun; and so destructive was the bombardment thus opened that fire–ships were sent against the bridge and battery. But the Genoese of Galata betrayed the scheme, and it was baffled. The prisoners captured were hanged in view of the Greeks, and in retaliation Constantine exposed the heads of a hundred and sixty Turks from the wall.

On the landward side Mahommed was not less fortunate. The zigzag trench was completed, and a footing obtained for his men in the moat, whence they strove to undermine the walls.

Of the lives lost during these operations no account was taken, since the hordes were the victims. Their bodies were left as debris in the roadway so expensively constructed. Day after day the towers Bagdad and St. Romain were more and more reduced. Immense sections of them tumbling into the ditch were there utilized. Day after day the exchange of bullets, bolts, stones, and arrows was incessant. The shouting in many tongues, heating of drums, and blowing of horns not seldom continued far into the night.

The Greeks on their side bore up bravely. Old John Grant plied the assailants with his inextinguishable fire. Constantine, in seeming always cheerful, never shirking, visited the walls; at night, he seconded Justiniani in hastening needful repairs. Finally the steady drain upon the stores in magazine began to tell. Provisions became scarce, and the diminution of powder threatened to silence the culverins and arquebuses. Then the Emperor divided his time between the defences and Sancta Sophia—between duty as a military commander, and prayer as a Christian trustful in God. And it was noticeable that the services at which he assisted in the ancient church were according to Latin rites; whereat the malcontents in the monasteries fell into deeper sullenness, and refused the dying the consolation of their presence. Gennadius assumed the authority of the absent Patriarch, and was influential as a prophet. The powerful Brotherhood of the St. James', composed of able–bodied gentry and nobles who should have been militant at the gates, regarded the Emperor as under

ban. Notaras and Justiniani quarrelled, and the feud spread to their respective followers.

One day, about the time the Turkish ships dropped, as it were, from the sky into the harbor, when the store of powder was almost exhausted, and famine menaced the city, five galleys were reported in the offing down the Marmora. About the same time the Turkish flotilla was observed making ready for action. The hungry people crowded the wall from the Seven Towers to Point Serail. The Emperor rode thither in haste, while Mahommed betook himself to the shore of the sea. A naval battle ensued under the eyes of the two.**[57]** The Christian squadron made the Golden Horn, and passed triumphantly behind the chain defending it. They brought supplies of corn and powder. The relief had the appearance of a merciful Providence, and forthwith the fighting was renewed with increased ardor. Kalil the Vizier exhorted Mahommed to abandon the siege.

"What, retire now? Now that the gate St. Romain is in ruins and the ditch filled?" the Sultan cried in rage. "No, my bones to Eyoub, my soul to Eblis first. Allah sent me here to conquer."

Those around attributed his firmness, some to religious zeal, some to ambition; none of them suspected how much the compact with Count Corti had to do with his decision.

To the lasting shame of Christian Europe, the arrival of the five galleys, and the victory they achieved, were all of succor and cheer permitted the heroic Emperor.

But the unequal struggle wore on, and with each set of sun Mahommed's hopes replumed themselves. From much fondling and kissing the sword of Solomon, and swearing by it, the steel communicated itself to his will; while on the side of the besieged, failures, dissensions, watching and labor, disparity in numbers, inferiority in arms, the ravages of death, and the neglect of Christendom, slowly but surely invited despair.

Weeks passed thus. April went out; and now it is the twenty–third of May. On the twenty–ninth—six days off—the stars, so we have seen, will permit an assault.

And on this day the time is verging midnight. Between the sky and the beleaguered town a pall of clouds is hanging thick. At intervals light showers filter through the pall, and the drops fall perpendicularly, for there is no wind. And the earth has its wrap of darkness, only over the seven hills of the old capital it appears to be in double folds oppressively close. Darkness and silence and vacancy, which do not require permission to enter by a gate, have possession of the streets and houses; except that now and then a solitary figure, gliding swiftly, turns a corner, pauses to hear, moves on again, and disappears as if it dropped a curtain behind it. Desertion is the rule. The hush is awful. Where are the people?

To find each other friends go from cellar to cellar. There are vaults and arched passages, crypts under churches and lordly habitations, deep, damp, mouldy, and smelling of rotten air, sheltering families. In many districts all life is underground. Sociality, because it cannot exist under such conditions save amongst rats and reptiles, ceased some time ago. Yet love is not dead—thanks, O Heaven, for the divine impulse!—it has merely taken on new modes of expression; it shows itself in tears, never in laughter; it has quit singing, it moans; and what moments mothers are not on their knees praying, they sit crouched, and clasping their little ones, and listen pale with fear and want. Listening is the universal habit; and the start and exclamation with which in the day the poor creatures recognize the explosive thunder of Mahommed's guns explain the origin of the habit.

At this particular hour of the twenty–third of May there are two notable exceptions to the statement that darkness, silence and vacancy have possession of the streets and houses.

By a combination of streets most favorable for the purpose, a thoroughfare had come into use along which traffic preferably drove its bulky commodities from St. Peter's on the harbor to the Gates St. Romain and Adrianople; its greater distance between terminal points being offset by advantages such as solidity, width and gentler grades. In one of the turns of this very crooked way there is now a murky flush cast by flambeaux sputtering and borne in hand. On either side one may see the fronts of houses without tenants, and in the way itself long lines of men

tugging with united effort at some cumbrous body behind them. There is no clamor. The labor is heavy, and the laborers in earnest. Some of them wear round steel caps, but the majority are civilians with here and there a monk, the latter by the Latin cross at his girdle an *azymite*. Now and then the light flashes back from a naked torso streaming with perspiration. One man in armor rides up and down the lines on horseback. He too is in earnest. He speaks low when he has occasion to stop and give a direction, but his face seen in flashes of the light is serious, and knit with purpose. The movement of the lines is slow; at times they come to a dead stand–still. If the halt appears too long the horseman rides back and comes presently to the black hull of a dismantled galley on rollers. The stoppages are to shift the rollers forward. When the shifting is done, he calls out: "Make ready, men!" Whereupon every one in the lines catches hold of a rope, and at his "Now—for love of Christ!" there follows a pull with might, and the hull drags on.

In these later days of the siege there are two persons actively engaged in the defence who are more wrought upon by the untowardness of the situation than any or all their associates—they are the Emperor and Count Corti.

There should be no difficulty in divining the cause of the former's distress. It was too apparent to him that his empire was in desperate straits; that as St. Romain underwent its daily reduction so his remnant of State and power declined. And beholding the dissolution was very like being an enforced witness of his own dying.

But Count Corti with the deepening of the danger only exerted himself the more. He seemed everywhere present—now on the ruins of the towers, now in the moat, now foremost in a countermine, and daily his recklessness increased. His feats with bow and sword amazed his friends. He became a terror to the enemy. He never tired. No one knew when he slept. And as note was taken of him, the question was continually on the lip, What possesses the man? He is a foreigner—this is not his home—he has no kindred here—what can be his motive? And there were who said it was Christian zeal; others surmised it was soldier habit; others again, that

for some reason he was disgusted with life; yet others, themselves of sordid natures, said the Emperor affected him, and that he was striving for a great reward in promise. As in the camps of the besiegers none knew the actual reason of Mahommed's persistence, so here the secret of the activity which left the Count without a peer in performance and daring went without explanation.

A few—amongst them the Emperor—were aware of the meaning of the red net about the Italian's neck—it shone so frequently through the smoke and dust of hourly conflict as to have become a subject of general observation—yet in the common opinion he was only the lady's knight; and his battle cry, *For Christ and Irene—Now!* did but confirm the opinion. Time and time again, Mahommed beheld the doughty deeds of his rival, heard his shout, saw the flash of his blade, sometimes near, sometimes afar, but always where the press was thickest. Strange was it that of the two hosts he alone understood the other's inspiration? He had only to look into his own heart, and measure the force of the passion there.

The horseman we see in charge of the removal of the galley–hulk this night of the twenty–third of May is Count Corti. It is wanted at St. Romain. The gate is a hill of stone and mortar, without form; the moat almost level from side to side; and Justiniani has decided upon a barricade behind a new ditch. He will fill the hull with stones, and defend from its deck; and it must be on the ground by break of day.

Precisely as Count Corti was bringing the galley around the turn of the thoroughfare, Constantine was at the altar in Sancta Sophia where preparations for mass were making; that is, the priests were changing their vestments, and the acolytes lighting the tall candles. The Emperor sat in his chair of state just inside the brass railing, unattended except by his sword–bearer. His hands were on his knees, his head bowed low. He was acknowledging a positive need of prayer. The ruin at the gate was palpable; but God reigned, and might be reserving his power for a miraculous demonstration.

The preparation was about finished when, from the entrances of the Church opposite the nave, a shuffling of many feet was heard. The light in

that quarter was weak, and some moments passed before the Emperor perceived a small procession advancing, and arose. The garbs were of orthodox Brotherhoods which had been most bitter in their denunciation. None of them had approached the door of the holy house for weeks.

The imperial mind was greatly agitated by the sight. Were the brethren recanting their unpatriotic resolutions? Had Heaven at last given them an understanding of the peril of the city? Had it brought to them a realization of the consequences if it fell under the yoke of the Turk?—That the whole East would then be lost to Christendom, with no date for its return? A miracle!—and to God the glory! And without a thought of himself the devoted man walked to the gate of the railing, and opening it, waited to receive the penitents.

Before him in front of the gate they knelt—in so far they yielded to custom.

"Brethren," he said, "this high altar has not been honored with your presence for many days. As Basileus, I bid you welcome back, and dare urge the welcome in God's holy name. Reason instructs me that your return is for a purpose in some manner connected with the unhappy condition in which our city and empire, not to mention our religion, are plunged. Rise, one of you, and tell me to what your appearance at this solemn hour is due."

A brother in gray, old and stooped, arose, and replied:

"Your Majesty, it cannot be that you are unacquainted with the traditions of ancient origin concerning Constantinople and Hagia Sophia; forgive us, however, if we fear you are not equally well informed of a more recent prophecy, creditably derived, we think, and presume to speak of its terms. 'The infidels'—so the prediction runs—'will enter the city; but the instant they arrive at the column of Constantine the Great, an angel will descend from Heaven, and put a sword in the hands of a man of low estate seated at the foot of the column, and order him to avenge the people of God with it. Overcome by sudden terror, the Turks will then take to flight, and be driven, not only from the city, but to the frontier of Persia.'**[58]** This prediction relieves us, and all who believe in it, from fear of Mahommed

and his impious hordes, and we are grateful to Heaven for the Divine intervention. But, Your Majesty, we think to be forgiven, if we desire the honor of the deliverance to be accounted to the Holy Mother who has had our fathers in care for so many ages, and redeemed them miraculously in instances within Your Majesty's knowledge. Wherefore to our purpose… We have been deputed by the Brotherhoods in Constantinople, united in devotion to the Most Blessed Madonna of Blacherne, to pray your permission to take the *Panagia* from the Church of the Virgin of Hodegetria, where it has been since the week of the Passover, and intrust it to the pious women of the city. To–morrow at noon, Your Majesty consenting, they will assemble at the Acropolis, and with the banner at their head, go in procession along the walls and to every threatened gate, never doubting that at the sight of it the Sultan and his unbaptized hordes will be reft of breath of body or take to flight… This we pray of Your Majesty, that the Mother of God may in these degenerate days have back the honor and worship accorded her by the Emperors and Greeks of former times."

The old man ceased, and again fell upon his knees, while his associate deputies rang the space with loud *Amens*.

It was well the light was dim, and the Emperor's face in shadow; it was well the posture of the petitioners helped hide him from close study; a feeling mixed of pity, contempt, and unutterable indignation seized him, distorting his features, and shaking his whole person. Recantation and repentance!—Pledge of loyalty!—Offer of service at the gates and on the shattered walls!—Heaven help him! There was no word of apology for their errors and remissness—not a syllable in acknowledgment of his labors and services—and he about to pray God for strength to die if the need were, as became the Emperor of a brave and noble people!

An instant he stood gazing at them—an instant of grief, shame, mortification, indignation, all heightened by a burning sense of personal wrong. Ay, God help him!

"Bear with me a little," he said quietly, and passing the waiting priests, went and knelt upon a step of the altar in position to lay his head upon the

upper step. Minutes passed thus. The deputies supposed him praying for the success of the morrow's display; he was in fact praying for self–possession to answer them as his judgment of policy demanded.

At length he arose, and returned to them, and had calmness to say:

"Arise, brethren, and go in peace. The keeper of the Church will deliver the sacred banner to the pious women. Only I insist upon a condition; if any of them are slain by the enemy, whom you and they know to have been bred in denial of womanly virtue, scorning their own mothers and wives, and making merchandise of their daughters—if any of them be slain, I say, then you shall bear witness to those who sent you to me that I am innocent of the blood–guilt. Arise, and go in peace."

They marched out of the Church as they had come in, and he proceeded with the service.

Next day about ten o'clock in the morning there was a lull in the fighting at the Gate St. Romain. It were probably better to say the Turks for some reason rested from their work of bringing stones, tree–trunks, earth in hand carts, and timbers wrenched from houses—everything, in fact, which would serve to substantially fill the moat in that quarter. Then upon the highest heap of what had been the tower of Bagdad Count Corti appeared, a black shield on his arm, his bow in one hand, his banderole in the other.

"Have a care, have a care!" his friends halloed. "They are about firing the great gun."

Corti seemed not to hear, but deliberately planted the banderole, and blowing his trumpet three times, drew an arrow from the quiver at his back. The gun was discharged, the bullet striking below him. When the dust cleared away, he replied with his trumpet. Then the Turks, keeping their distance, set up a cry. Most of the arrows shot at him fell short. Seeing their indisposition to accept his challenge, he took seat upon a stone.

Not long then until a horseman rode out from the line of Janissaries still guarding the eminence, and advanced down the left of the zigzag galloping.

He was in chain mail glistening like gold, but wore flowing yellow trousers, while his feet were buried in shoe–stirrups of the royal metal. Looking over the small round black shield on his left arm, and holding a bow in the right hand, easy in the saddle, calm, confident, the champion slackened speed when within arrow flight, but commenced caracoling immediately. A prolonged hoarse cry arose behind him. Of the Christians, the Count alone recognized the salute of the Janissaries, still an utterance amongst Turkish soldiers, in literal translation: *The Padishah! Live the Padishah!* The warrior was Mahommed himself!

Arising, the Count placed an arrow at the string, and shouted, "*For Christ and Irene—Now!*" With the last word, he loosed the shaft.

Catching the missile lightly on his shield, Mahommed shouted back: "*Allah–il–Allah!*" and sent a shaft in return. The exchange continued some minutes. In truth, the Count was not a little proud of the enemy's performance. If there was any weakness on his part, if his clutch of the notch at the instant of drawing the string was a trifle light, the fault was chargeable to a passing memory. This antagonist had been his pupil. How often in the school field, practising with blunted arrows, the two had joyously mimicked the encounter they were now holding. At last a bolt, clanging dully, dropped from the Sultan's shield, and observing that it was black feathered, he swung from his seat to the ground, and, shifting the horse between him and the foe, secured the missile, and remounted.

"Allah–il–Allah!" he cried, slowly backing the charger out of range.

The Count repeated the challenge through his trumpet, and sat upon the stone again; but no other antagonist showing himself, he at length descended from the heap.

In his tent Mahommed examined the bolt; and finding the head was of lead, he cut it open, and extracted a scrip inscribed thus:

"To–day at noon a procession of women will appear on the walls. You may know it by the white banner a monk will bear, with a picture of the Madonna painted on it. *The Princess Irene marches next after the banner.*"

Mahommed asked for the time. It was half after ten o'clock. In a few minutes the door was thronged by mounted officers, who, upon receiving a

verbal message from him, sped away fast as they could go.

Thereupon the conflict was reopened. Indeed, it raged more fiercely than at any previous time, the slingers and bowmen being pushed up to the outer edge of the moat, and the machines of every kind plied over their heads. In his ignorance of the miracle expected of the Lady of the Banner, Mahommed had a hope of deterring the extraordinary march.

Nevertheless at the appointed hour, ten o'clock, the Church of the Virgin of Hodegetria was surrounded by nuns and monks; and presently the choir of Sancta Sophia issued from the house, executing a solemn chant; the Emperor followed in Basilean vestments; then the *Panagia* appeared.

At sight of the picture of the Very Holy Virgin painted front view, the eyes upraised, the hands in posture of prayer, the breast covered by a portrait of the Child, the heads encircled by the usual nimbus, the mass knelt, uttering cries of adoration.

The Princess Irene, lightly veiled and attired in black, advanced, and, kissing the fringed corners of the hallowed relic, gathered the white staying ribbons in her hands; thereupon the monk appointed to carry it moved after the choir, and the nuns took places. And there were tears and sighs, but not of fear. The Mother of God would now assume the deliverance of her beloved capital. As it had been to the Avars, and later to the Russians under Askold and Dir, it would be now to Mahommed and his ferocious hordes—all Heaven would arm to punish them. They would not dare look at the picture twice, or if they did—well, there are many modes of death, and it will be for the dear Mother to choose. Thus the women argued. Possibly a perception of the failure in the defence, sharpened by a consciousness of the horrors in store for them if the city fell by assault, turned them to this. There is no relief from despair like faith.

From the little church, the devotees of the Very Holy Virgin took their way on foot to the southeast, chanting as they went, and as they went their number grew. Whence the accessions, none inquired.

They first reached a flight of steps leading to the banquette or footway along the wall near the Golden Gate. The noise of the conflict, the shouting and roar of an uncounted multitude of men in the heat and fury of

combat, not to more than mention the evidences of the conflict—arrows, bolts, and stones in overflight and falling in remittent showers—would have dispersed them in ordinary mood; but they were under protection—the Madonna was leading them—to be afraid was to deny her saving grace. And then there was no shrinking on the part of the Princess Irene. Even as she took time and song from the choir, they borrowed of her trust.

At the foot of the steps the singers turned aside to allow the *Panagia* to go first. The moment of miracle was come! What form would the manifestation take? Perhaps the doors and windows of Heaven would open for a rain of fire—perhaps the fighting angels who keep the throne of the Father would appear with swords of lightning—perhaps the Mother and Son would show themselves. Had they not spared and converted the Khagan of the Avars? Whatever the form, it were not becoming to stand between the *Panagia* and the enemy.

The holy man carrying the ensign was trustful as the women, and he ascended the steps without faltering. Gathering the ribbons a little more firmly in her hands, the Princess kept her place. Up—up they were borne—Mother and Son. Then the white banner was on the height—seen first by the Greeks keeping the wall, and in the places it discovered them, they fell upon their faces, next by the hordes. And they—oh, a miracle, a miracle truly!—they stood still. The bowman drawing his bow, the slinger whirling his sling, the arquebusers taking aim matches in hand, the strong men at the winches of the mangonels, all stopped—an arresting hand fell on them—they might have been changed to pillars of stone, so motionlessly did they stand and look at the white apparition. *Kyrie Eleison*, thrice repeated, then *Christie Eleison*, also thrice repeated, descended to them in the voices of women, shrilled by excitement.

And the banner moved along the wall, not swiftly as if terror had to do with its passing, but slowly, the image turned outwardly, the Princess next it, the ribbons in her hands; after her the choir in full chant; and then the long array of women in ecstasy of faith and triumph; for before they were all ascended, the hordes at the edge of the moat, and those at a distance—or rather such of them as death or wounds would permit—were retreating

to their entrenchment. Nor that merely—the arrest which had fallen at the Golden Gate extended along the front of leaguerment from the sea to Blacherne, from Blacherne to the Acropolis.

So it happened that in advance of the display of the picture, without waiting for the *Kyrie Eleison* of the glad procession, the Turks took to their defences; and through the city, from cellar, and vault, and crypt, and darkened passage, the wonderful story flew; and there being none to gainsay or explain it, the miracle was accepted, and the streets actually showed signs of a quick return to their old life. Even the very timid took heart, and went about thanking God and the *Panagia Blachernitissa*.

And here and there the monks passed, sleek and blithe, and complacently twirling the Greek crosses at the whip–ends of their rosaries of polished horn buttons large as walnuts, saying:

"The danger is gone. See what it is to have faith! Had we kept on trusting the *azymites*, whether Roman cardinal or apostate Emperor, a muezzin would ere long, perhaps to–morrow, be calling to prayer from the dome of Hagia Sophia. Blessed be the *Panagia!* To–night let us sleep; and then—then we will dismiss the mercenaries with their Latin tongues."

But there will be skeptics to the last hour of the last day; so is the world made of kinds of men. Constantine and Justiniani did not disarm or lay aside their care. In unpatriotic distrust, they kept post behind the ruins of St. Romain, and saw to it that the labor of planting the hull of the galley for a new wall, strengthened with another ditch of dangerous depth and width, was continued.

And they were wise; for about four o'clock in the afternoon, there was a blowing of horns on the parapet by the monster gun, and five heralds in tunics stiff with gold embroidery, and trousers to correspond—splendid fellows, under turbans like balloons, each with a trumpet of shining silver—set out for the gate, preceding a stately unarmed official.

The heralds halted now and then to execute a flourish. Constantine, recognizing an envoy, sent Justiniani and Count Corti to meet him beyond the moat, and they returned with the Sultan's formal demand for the surrender of the city. The message was threatening and imperious. The

Emperor replied offering to pay tribute. Mahommed rejected the proposal, and announced an assault.

The retirement of the hordes at sight of the *Panagia* on the wall was by Mahommed's order. His wilfulness extended to his love—he did not intend the Princess Irene should suffer harm.

CHAPTER X

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE ASSAULT

The artillery of Mahommed had been effective, though not to the same degree, elsewhere than at St. Romain. Jerome the Italian and Leonardo di Langasco the Genoese, defending the port of Blacherne in the lowland, had not been able to save the Xiloporta or Wood Gate on the harbor front harmless; under pounding of the floating battery it lay in the dust, like a battered helmet.

John Grant and Theodore de Carystos looked at the green hills of Eyoub in front of the gate Caligaria or Charsias, assigned to them, through fissures and tumbles–down which made their hearts sore. The Bochiardi brothers, Paul and Antonin, had fared no better in their defence of the gate Adrianople. At the gate Selimbria, Theophilus Palaeologus kept the Imperial flag flying, but the outer faces of the towers there were in the ditch serving the uses of the enemy. Contarino the Venetian, on the roof of the Golden Gate, was separated from the wall reaching northward to Selimbria by a breach wide enough to admit a chariot. Gabriel Trevisan, with his noble four hundred Venetians, kept good his grip on the harbor wall from the Acropolis to the gate of St. Peter's. Through the incapacity or treason of Duke Notaras, the upper portion of the Golden Horn was entirely lost to the Christians. From the Seven Towers to Galata the Ottoman fleet held the wall facing the Marmora as a net of close meshes holds the space of water it is to drag. In a word, the hour for assault had arrived, and from the twenty–fourth to evening of the twenty–eighth of May Mahommed diligently prepared for the event.

The attack he reduced to a bombardment barely sufficient to deter the besiegers from systematic repairs. The reports of his guns were but occasionally heard. At no time, however, was the energy of the man more conspicuous. Previously his orders to chief officers in command along the

line had been despatched to them; now he bade them to personal attendance; and, as may be fancied, the scene at his tent was orientally picturesque from sunrise to sunset. Such an abounding of Moslem princes and princes not Moslem, of Pachas, and Beys, and Governors of Castles, of Sheiks, and Captains of hordes without titles; such a medley of costumes, and armor, and strange ensigns; such a forest of tall shafts flying red horse–tails; such a herding of caparisoned steeds; such a company of trumpeters and heralds—had seldom if ever been seen. It seemed the East from the Euphrates and Red Sea to the Caspian, and the West far as the Iron Gates of the Danube, were there in warlike presence. Yet for the most part these selected lions of tribes kept in separate groups and regarded each other askance, having feuds and jealousies amongst themselves; and there was reason for their good behavior—around them, under arms, were fifteen thousand watchful Janissaries, the flower of the Sultan's host, of whom an old chronicler has said, Each one is a giant in stature, and the equal of ten ordinary men.

Throughout those four days but one man had place always at Mahommed's back, his confidant and adviser—not Kalil, it is to be remarked, or Saganos, or the Mollah Kourani, or Akschem–sed–din the Dervish.

"My Lord," the Prince of India had argued when the Sultan resolved to summon his vassal chiefs to personal conference, "all men love splendor; pleasing the eye is an inducement to the intelligent; exciting the astonishment of the vulgar disposes them to submit to superiority in another without wounding their vanity. The Rajahs in my country practise this philosophy with a thorough understanding. Having frequently to hold council with their officials, into the tent or hall of ceremony they bring their utmost riches. The lesson is open to my Lord."

So when his leaders of men were ushered into the audience, the interior of Mahommed's tent was extravagantly furnished, and their prostrations were at the step of a throne. Nevertheless in consenting to the suggestion, the Sultan had insisted upon a condition.

"They shall not mistake me for something else than a warrior—a politician or a diplomatist, for instance—or think the heaviest blow I can deal is with the tongue or a pen. Art thou hearing, Prince?"

"I hear, my Lord."

"So, by the tomb of the Prophet—may his name be exalted!—my household, viziers and all, shall stand at my left; but here on my right I will have my horse in panoply; and he shall bear my mace and champ his golden bit, and be ready to tread on such of the beggars as behave unseemly."

And over the blue and yellow silken rugs of Khorassan, with which the space at the right of the throne was spread, the horse, bitted and house led, had free range, an impressive reminder of the master's business of life.

As they were Christians or Moslems, Mahommed addressed the vassals honored by his summons, and admitted separately to his presence; for the same arguments might not be pleasing to both.

"I give you trust," he would say to the Christian, "and look for brave and loyal service from you… I shall be present with you, and as an eyewitness judge of your valor, and never had men such incentives. The wealth of ages is in the walls before us, and it shall be yours—money, jewels, goods and people—all yours as you can lay hands on it. I reserve only the houses and churches. Are you poor, you may go away rich; if rich, you may be richer; for what you get will be honorable earnings of your right hand of which none shall dispossess you—and to that treaty I swear… Rise now, and put your men in readiness. The stars have promised me this city, and their promises are as the breath of the God we both adore."

Very different in style and matter were his utterances to a Moslem.

"What is that hanging from thy belt?"

"It is a sword, my Lord."

"God is God, and there is no other God—*Amin!* And he it was who planted iron in the earth, and showed the miner where it was hid, and taught the armorer to give it form, and harden it, even the blade at thy belt; for God had need of an instrument for the punishment of those who say

'God hath partners.'… And who are they that say 'God hath partners—a Son and his Mother'? Here have they their stronghold; and here have we been brought to make roads through its walls, and turn their palaces of unbelief into harems. For that thou hast thy sword, and I mine—*Amin!*… It is the will of God that we despoil these *Gabours* of their wealth and their women; for are they not of those of whom it is said: 'In their hearts is a disease, and God hath increased their disease, and for them is ordained a painful punishment, because they have charged the Prophet of God with falsehood'? That they who escape the sharpness of our swords shall be as beggars, and slaves, and homeless wanderers—such is the punishment, and it is the judgment of God—*Amin!* … That they shall leave all they have behind them—so also hath God willed, and I say it shall be. I swear it. And that they leave behind them is for us who were appointed from the beginning of the world to take it; that also God wills, and I say it shall be. I swear it. *Amin!*… What if the way be perilous, as I grant it is? Is it not written: 'A soul cannot die except by permission of God, according to a writing of God, definite as to time'? And if a man die, is it not also written: 'Repute not those slain in God's cause to be dead; nay, alive with God, they are provided for'? They are people of the 'right hand,' of whom it is written: 'They shall be brought nigh God in the gardens of delight, upon inwrought couches reclining face to face. Youths ever young shall go unto them round about with goblets and ewers, and a cup of flowing wine; and fruits of the sort which they shall choose, and the flesh of birds of the kind which they shall desire, and damsels with eyes like pearls laid up, we will give them as a reward for that which they have done.'… But the appointed time is not yet for all of us—nay, it is for the fewest— *Amin!*… And when the will of God is done, then for such as live, lo! over the walls yonder are gold refined and coined, and gold in vessels, and damsels on silken couches, their cheeks like roses of Damascus, their arms whiter and cooler than lilies, and as pearls laid up are their eyes, and their bodies sweeter than musk on the wings of the south wind in a grove of palms. With the gold we can make gardens of delight; and the damsels set down in the gardens, ours the fault if the promise be not made good as it was spoken by the Prophet—'Paradise shall be brought near unto the pious, to a place

not distant from them, so they shall see it!'… Being of those who shall 'receive their books in the right hand,' more need not be said unto you. I only reserve for myself the houses when you have despoiled them, and the churches. Make ready yourself and your people, and tell them faithfully what I say, and swear to. I will come to you with final orders. Arise!"**[59]**

From sunrise to sunset of the twenty–seventh Mahommed was in the saddle going with the retinue of a conqueror from chief to chief. From each he drew a detachment to be held in reserve. One hundred thousand men were thus detached.

"See to it," he said finally, "that you direct your main effort against the gate in front of you… Put the wild men in the advance. The dead will be useful in the ditch… Have the ladders at hand… At the sound of my trumpets, charge… Proclaim for me that he who is first upon the walls shall have choice of a province. I will make him governor. God is God. I am his servant, ordering as he has ordered."

On the twenty–eighth, he sent all the dervishes in camp to preach to the Moslems in arms; and of such effect were their promises of pillage and Paradise that after the hour of the fifth prayer, the multitude, in all quite two hundred and fifty thousand, abandoned themselves to transports of fanaticism. Of their huts and booths they made heaps, and at night set fire to them; and the tents of the Pachas and great officers being illuminated, and the ships perfecting the blockade dressed in lights, the entrenchment from Blacherne to the Seven Towers, and the sea thence to the Acropolis, were in a continued brilliance reaching up to the sky. Even the campania was invaded by the dazzlement of countless bonfires.

And from the walls the besieged, if they looked, beheld the antics of the hordes; if they listened, they heard the noise, in the distance, a prolonged, inarticulate, irregular clamor of voices, near by, a confusion of songs and cries. At times the bray of trumpets and the roll of drums great and small shook the air, and smothered every rival sound. And where the dervishes came, in their passage from group to group, the excitement arose out of bounds, while their dancing lent diablerie to the scene.

Assuredly there was enough in what they beheld to sink the spirit of the besieged, even the boldest of them. The cry *Allah–il–Allah* shouted from the moat was trifling in comparison with what they might have overheard around the bonfires.

"Why do you burn your huts?" asked a prudent officer of his men.

"Because we will not need them more. The city is for us to–morrow. The Padishah has promised and sworn."

"Did he swear it?"

"Ay, by the bones of the Three in the Tomb of the Prophet."

At another fire, the following:

"Yes, I have chosen my palace already. It is on the hill over there in the west."

And again:

"Tell us, O son of Mousa, when we are in the town what will you look for?"

"The things I most want."

"Well, what things?"

"May the Jinn fill thy stomach with green figs for such a question of my mother's son! What things? Two horses out of the Emperor's stable. And thou—what wilt thou put thy hand to first?"

"Oh, I have not made up my mind! I am thinking of a load of gold for my camel—enough to take my father and his three wives to Mecca, and buy water for them from the Zem–zem. Praised be Allah!"

"Bah! Gold will be cheap."

"Yes, as bezants; but I have heard of a bucket the unbelieving Greeks use at times for mixing wine and bread in. It is when they eat the body of their God. They say the bucket is so big it takes six fat priests to lift it."

"It is too big. I'll gather the bezants."

"Well," said a third, with a loud Moslem oath, "keep to your gold, whether in pots or coin. For me—for me"—

"Ha, ha!—he don't know."

"Don't I? Thou grinning son of a Hindoo ape."

"What is it, then?"

"The thing which is first in thy mind."

"Name it."

"A string of women."

"Old or young?"

"An *hoo–rey–yeh* is never old."

"What judgment!" sneered the other. "I will take some of the old ones as well."

"What for?"

"For slaves to wait on the young. Was it not said by a wise man, 'Sweet water in the jar is not more precious than peace in the family'?"

Undoubtedly the evil genius of Byzantium in this peril was the Prince of India.

"My Lord," he had said, cynically, "of a truth a man brave in the day can be turned into a quaking coward at night; you have but to present him a danger substantial enough to quicken his imagination. These Greeks have withstood you stoutly; try them now with your power a vision of darkness."

"How, Prince?"

"In view and hearing from the walls let the hordes kindle fires to–night. Multiply the fires, if need be, and keep the thousands in motion about them, making a spectacle such as this generation has not seen; then"—

The singular man stopped to laugh.

Mahommed gazed at him in silent wonder.

"Then," he continued, "so will distorted fancy do its work, that by midnight the city will be on its knees praying to the Mother of God, and every armed man on the walls who has a wife or daughter will think he hears himself called to for protection. Try it, my Lord, and thou mayst whack my flesh into ribbons if by dawn the general fear have not left but a half task for thy sword."

It was as the Jew said.

Attracted by the illumination in the sky, suggestive of something vast and terrible going on outside the walls, and still full of faith in a miraculous deliverance, thousands hastened to see the mercy. What an awakening was in store for them! Enemies seemed to have arisen out of the earth—devils, not men. The world to the horizon's rim appeared oppressed with them. Nor was it possible to misapprehend the meaning of what they beheld. "To–morrow—to–morrow"—they whispered to each other—"God keep us!" and pouring back into the streets, they became each a preacher of despair. Yet—marvelous to say—the monks sallied from their cells with words of cheer.

"Have faith," they said. "See, we are not afraid. The Blessed Mother has not deserted her children. Believe in her. She is resolved to allow the *azymite* Emperor to exhaust his vanity that in the last hour he and his Latin myrmidons may not deny her the merit of the salvation. Compose yourselves, and fear not. The angel will find the poor man at the column of Constantine."

The ordinary soul beset with fears, and sinking into hopelessness, is always ready to accept a promise of rest. The people listened to the priestly soothsayers. Nay, the too comforting assurance made its way to the defenders at the gates, and hundreds of them deserted their posts; leaving the enemy to creep in from the moat, and, with hooks on long poles, actually pull down some of the new defences.

It scarcely requires telling how these complications added weight to the cares with which the Emperor was already overladen. Through the afternoon he sat by the open window of a room above the Cercoporta, or sunken gate under the southern face of his High Residence,**[60]** watching the movements of the Turks. The subtle prophet which sometimes mercifully goes before death had discharged its office with him. He had dismissed his last hope. Beyond peradventure the hardest task to one pondering his fate uprisen and standing before him with all its attending circumstances, is to make peace with himself; which is simply viewing the attractions of this life as birds of plumage in a golden cage, and

deliberately opening the door, and letting them loose, knowing they can never return. This the purest and noblest of the imperial Greeks—the evil times in which his race as a ruler was run prevent us from terming him the greatest—had done.

He was in armor, and his sword rested against the cheek of a window. His faithful attendants came in occasionally, and spoke to him in low tones; but for the most part he was alone.

The view of the enemy was fair. He could see their intrenchment, and the tents and ruder quarters behind it. He could see the standards, many of them without meaning to him, the detachments on duty and watchful, the horsemen coming and going, and now and then a column in movement. He could hear the shouting, and he knew the meaning of it all—the final tempest was gathering.

About four o'clock in the afternoon, Phranza entered the room, and going to his master's right hand, was in the act of prostrating himself.

"No, my Lord," said the Emperor, reaching out to stay him, and smiling pleasantly, "let us have done with ceremony. Thou hast been true servant to me—I testify it, God hearing—and now I promote thee. Be as my other self. Speak to me standing. To–morrow is my end of days. In death no man is greater than another. Tell me what thou bringest."

On his knees, the Grand Chamberlain took the steel–gloved hand nearest him, and carried it to his lips.

"Your Majesty, no servant had ever a more considerate and loving master."

An oppressive silence followed. They were both thinking the same thought, and it was too sad for speech.

"The duty Your Majesty charged me with this morning"—thus Phranza upon recovery of his composure—"I attended to."

"And you found it?"

"Even as Your Majesty had warning. The Hegumens of the Brotherhoods"—

"All of them, O Phranza?"

"All of them, Your Majesty—assembled in a cloister of the Pantocrator."

"Gennadius again!"

The Emperor's hands closed, and there was an impatient twitching of his lips.

"Though why should I be astonished? Hark, my friend! I will tell thee what I have as yet spoken to no man else. Thou knowest Kalil the Vizier has been these many years my tributary, and that he hath done me many kindly acts, not always in his master's interest. The night of the day our Christian ships beat the Turks the Grand Vizier sent me an account of a stormy scene in Mahommed's tent, and advised me to beware of Gennadius. Ah, I had fancied myself prepared to drink the cup Heaven hath in store for me, lees and all, without a murmur, but men will be men until their second birth. It is nature!… Oh, my Phranza, what thinkest thou the false monk is carrying under his hood?"

"Some egg of treason, I doubt not."

"Having driven His Serenity, the pious and venerable Gregory, into exile, he aspires to succeed him."

"The hypocrite!—the impostor!—the perjured!—He, Patriarch!" cried Phranza, with upraised eyes.

"And from whose hands thinkest thou he dreams of deriving the honor?"

"Not Your Majesty's."

The Emperor smiled faintly. "No—he regards Mahommed the Sultan a better patron, if not a better Christian."

"Forbid it Heaven!" and Phranza crossed himself repeatedly.

"Nay, good friend, hear his scheme, then thou mayst call the forbidding powers with undeniable reason…He undertook—so Kalil privily declared—if Mahommed would invest him with the Patriarchate, to deliver Constantinople to him."

"By what means? He has no gate in keeping—he is not even a soldier."

"My poor Phranza! Hast thou yet to learn that perfidy is not a trait of any class? This gowned traitor hath a key to all the gates. Hear him—I will ply

the superstition of the Greeks, and draw them from the walls with a prophecy."

Phranza was able to cry out: "Oh! that so brave a prince, so good a master should be at the mercy of—of such a"—

"With all thy learning, I see thou lackest a word. Let it pass, let it pass—I understand thee…But what further hast thou from the meeting?"

Phranza caught the hand again, and laid his forehead upon it while he replied: "To–night the Brotherhoods are to go out, and renew the story of the angel, and the man at the foot of the column of Constantine." The calmness of the Emperor was wonderful. He gazed at the Turks through the window, and, after reflection, said tranquilly:

"I would have saved it—this old empire of our fathers; but my utmost now is to die for it—ay, as if I were blind to its unworthiness. God's will be done, not mine!"

"Talk not of dying—O beloved Lord and master, talk not so! It is not too late for composition. Give me your terms, and I will go with them to"—

"Nay, friend, I have done better—I have made peace with myself… I shall be no man's slave. There is nothing more for me—nothing except an honorable death. How sweet a grace it is that we can put so much glory in dying! A day of Greek regeneration may come—then there may be some to do me honor—some to find worthy lessons in my life—perchance another Emperor of Byzantium to remember how the last of the Palaeologae accepted the will of God revealed to him in treachery and treason… But there is one at the door knocking as he were in haste. Let him enter."

An officer of the guard was admitted.

"Your Majesty," he said, after salutation, "the Captain Justiniani, and the Genoese, his friends, are preparing to abandon the gates."

Constantine seized his sword, and arose.

"Tell me about it," he said, simply.

"Justiniani has the new ditch at St. Romain nearly completed, and wanting some cannon, he made request for them of the High Admiral, who

refused, saying, 'The foreign cowards must take care of themselves.'"

"Ride, sir, to the noble Captain, and tell him I am at thy heels."

"Is the Duke mad?" Constantine continued, the messenger having departed. "What can he want? He is rich, and hath a family—boys verging on manhood, and of excellent promise. Ah, my dear friend in need, what canst thou see of gain for him from Mahommed?"

"Life, your Majesty—life, and greater riches."

"How? I did not suppose thou thoughtest so ill of men."

"Of some—of some—not all." Then Phranza raised his head, and asked, bitterly: "If five galleys won the harbor, every Moslem sail opposing, why could not twelve or more do better? Does not Mahommed draw his supplies by sea?"

The Emperor looked out of the window again, but not at the Turks.

"Lord Phranza," he said, presently, "thou mayst survive to–morrow's calamity; if so, being as thou art skilful with the pen, write of me in thy day of leisure two things; first, I dared not break with Duke Notaras while Mahommed was striving for my gates—he could and would have seized my throne—the Church, the Brotherhoods, and the people are with him—I am an *azymite*. Say of me next that I have always held the decree of union proclaimed by the Council of Florence binding upon Greek conscience, and had I lived, God helping me roll back this flood of Islam, it should have been enforced… Hither—look hither, Lord Phranza"—he pointed out of the window—"and thou wilt see an argument of as many divisions as there are infidels beleaguering us why the Church of Christ should have one head; and as to whether the head should be Patriarch or Bishop, is it not enough that we are perishing for want of Western swords?"—He would have fallen into silence again, but roused himself: "So much for the place I would have in the world's memory… But to the present affair. Reparation is due Justiniani and his associates. Do thou prepare a repast in the great dining hall. Our resources are so reduced I may not speak of it as a banquet; but as thou lovest me do thy best with what we have. For my part, I will ride and summon every noble Greek in arms for Church and State,

and the foreign captains. In such cheer, perhaps, we can heal the wounds inflicted by Notaras. We can at least make ready to die with grace."

He went out, and taking horse, rode at speed to the Gate St. Romain, and succeeded in soothing the offended Genoese.

At ten o'clock the banquet was held. The chroniclers say of it that there were speeches, embraces, and a fresh resolution to fight, and endure the worst or conquer. And they chose a battle–cry—*Christ and Holy Church.* At separating, the Emperor, with infinite tenderness, but never more knightly, prayed forgiveness of any he might have wronged or affronted; and the guests came one by one to bid him adieu, and he commended them to God, and the gratitude of Christians in the ages to come, and his hands were drenched with their tears.

From the Very High Residence he visited the gates, and was partially successful in arresting the desertions actually in progress.

Finally, all other duties done, his mind turning once more to God, he rode to Sancta Sophia, heard mass, partook of the Communion, and received absolution according to Latin rite; after which the morrow could hold no surprise for him. And he found comfort repeating his own word: How sweet a grace it is that we can put so much glory in dying.

CHAPTER XI

COUNT CORTI IN DILEMMA

From the repast at Blacherne—festive it was in no sense—Count Corti escorted the Emperor to the door of Sancta Sophia; whence, by permission, and taking with him his nine Berbers, he rode slowly to the residence of the Princess Irene. Slowly, we say, for nowhere in the pent area of Byzantium was there a soul more oppressed.

If he looked up, it was to fancy all the fortunate planets seated in their Houses helping Mahommed's star to a fullest flood of splendor; if he looked down, it was to see the wager—and his soul cried out, Lost! Lost! Though one be rich, or great, or superior in his calling, wherein is the profit of it if he have lost his love?

Besides the anguish of a perception of his rival's better fortune, the Count was bowed by the necessity of deciding certain consequences unforeseen at the time the wager was made. The place of the surrender of the Princess was fixed. Thinking forward now, he could anticipate the scene in the great church—the pack of fugitives, their terror and despair, the hordes raging amongst them. How was he single–handed to save her unharmed in the scramble of the hour? Thoughts of her youth, beauty, and rank, theretofore inspirations out of Heaven, set him to shivering with an ague more like fear than any he had ever known.

Nor was this all. The surrender was by the terms to be to Mahommed himself. The Sultan was to demand her of him. He groaned aloud: "Oh, dear God and Holy Mother, be merciful, and let me die!" For the first time it was given him to see, not alone that he might lose the woman to his soul all the sun is to the world, but her respect as well. By what management was he to make the surrender without exposing the understanding between the conqueror and himself? She would be present—she would see what took place—she would hear what was said. And she would not be

frightened. The image of the Madonna above the altar in the nave would not be more calm. The vaguest suspicion of a compact, and she the subject, would put her upon inquiry; then—"Oh, fool—idiot—insensate as my sword–grip!" Thus, between groans, he scourged himself.

It was late, but her home was now a hospital filled with wounded men, and she its sleepless angel. Old Lysander admitted him.

"The Princess Irene is in the chapel."

Thus directed, the Count went thither well knowing the way.

A soldier just dead was the theme of a solemn recital by Sergius. The room was crowded with women in the deepest excitement of fear. Corti understood the cause. Poor creatures! They had need of religious comfort. A thousand ghosts in one view could not have overcome them as did the approach of the morrow.

At the right of the altar, he discovered the Princess in the midst of her attendants, who kept close to her, like young birds to the mother in alarm. She was quiet and self–contained. Apparently she alone heard the words of the reader; and whereas the Count came in a penitent—doubtful— in a maze—unknowing what to do or where to turn, one glance at her face restored him. He resolved to tell her his history, omitting only the character in which he entered her kinsman's service, and the odious compact with Mahommed. Her consent to accompany him to Sancta Sophia must be obtained; for that he was come.

His presence in the chapel awakened a suppressed excitement, and directly the Princess came to him.

"What has happened, Count Corti? Why are you here?"

"To speak with you, O Princess Irene'"

"Go with me, then."

She conducted him into a passage, and closed the door behind them.

"The floor of my reception room is overlaid with the sick and suffering — my whole house is given up to them. Speak here; and if the news be bad, dear Count, it were mercy not to permit the unfortunates to hear you."

She was not thinking of herself. He took the hand extended to him, and kissed it—to him it was the hand of more than the most beautiful woman in the world—it was the hand of a saint in white transfigurement.

"Thy imperial kinsman, O Princess, is at the church partaking of the Holy Communion, and receiving absolution."

"At this hour? Why is he there, Count?"

Corti told her of the repast at the palace, and recounted the scene at parting.

"It looks like despair. Can it be the Emperor is making ready to die? Answer, and fear not for me. My life has been a long preparation. He believes the defence is lost—the captains believe so—and thou?"

"O Princess, it is terrible saying, but I too expect the judgment of God in the morning."

The hall was so dimly lighted he could not see her face; but the nerve of sympathy is fine—he felt she trembled. Only a moment—scarcely longer than taking a breath—then she answered:

"Judgment is for us all. It will find me here."

She moved as if to return to the chapel; but he stepped before her, and drawing out a chair standing by the door, said, firmly, yet tenderly:

"You are weary. The labor of helping the unfortunate these many days—the watching and anxiety—have been trying upon you. Sit, I pray, and hear me."

She yielded with a sigh.

"The judgment which would find you here, O Princes, would not be death, but something more terrible, so terrible words burn in thinking of it. I have sworn to defend you: and the oath, and the will to keep it, give me the right to determine where and how the defence shall be made. If there are advantages, I want them, for your sweet sake"

He stopped to master his feeling.

"You have never stood on the deck of a ship in wreck, and seen the sea rush in to overwhelm it," he went on presently: "I have; and I declare to

you, O beloved lady, nothing can be so like to–morrow when the hordes break into the city, as that triumph of waters; and as on the deck there was no place of safety for the perishing crew, neither will there be place of safety for man, woman, or child in Byzantium then—least of all for the kinswoman of the Emperor—for her—permit me to say it—whose loveliness and virtue are themes for story–tellers throughout the East. As a prize—whether for ransom or dishonor—richer than the churches and the palaces, and their belongings, be they jewels or gold, or anointed crown, or bone of Saint, or splinter of the True Cross, or shred from the shirt of Christ—to him who loves her, a prize of such excellence that glory, even the glory Mahommed is now dreaming of when he shall have wrenched the keys of the gates from their rightful owner dead in the bloody breach, would pale if set beside it for comparison, and sink out of sight—think you she will not be hunted? Or that the painted Mother above the altar, though it spoke through a miraculous halo, could save her when found? No, no, Princess, not here, not here!… You know I love you; in an unreasoning moment I dared tell you so; and you may think me passion–blind, and that I hung the vow to defend you upon my soul's neck, thinking it light as this favor you were pleased to give me; that love being a braggart, therefore I am a braggart. Let me set myself right in your opinion—your good opinion, O Princess, for it is to me a world of such fair shining I dream of it as of a garden in Paradise… If you do not know how hardly I have striven in this war, send, I pray, and ask any of the captains, or the most Christian sovereign I have just left making his peace with God. Some of them called me mad, but I pardoned them—they did not know the meaning of my battle–cry—'For Christ and Irene'—that I was venturing life less for Constantinople, less for religion—I almost said, less for Christ—than for you, who are all things in one to me, the fairest on earth, the best in Heaven… At last, at last I am driven to admit we may fail—that to–morrow, whether I am here or there, at your side or under the trampling, you may be a prisoner at mercy."

At these words, of infinite anguish in utterance, the Princess shuddered, and looked up in silent appeal.

"Attend me now. You have courage above the courage of women; therefore I may speak with plainness… What will become of you—I give the conclusion of many wrangles with myself—what will become of you depends upon the hands which happen to be laid on you first. O Princess, are you giving me heed? Do you comprehend me?"

"The words concern me more than life, Count."

"I may go on then… I have hope of saving your life and honor. You have but to do what I advise. If you cannot trust me, further speech were idleness, and I might as well take leave of you. Death in many forms will be abroad to–morrow—nothing so easily found."

"Count Corti," she returned, "if I hesitate pledging myself, it is not because of distrust. I will hear you."

"It is well said, dear lady."

He stopped—a pleasant warmth was in his heart—a perception, like dim light, began breaking through the obscurities in his mind. To this moment, in fact, he had trouble gaining his own consent to the proposal on his tongue; it seemed so like treachery to the noble woman—so like a cunning inveiglement to deliver her to Mahommed under the hated compact. Now suddenly the proposal assumed another appearance—it was the best course—the best had there been no wager, no compact, no obligation but knightly duty to her. As he proceeded, this conviction grew clearer, bringing him ease of conscience and the subtle influence of a master arguing right. He told her his history then, holding nothing back but the two points mentioned. Twice only she interrupted him.

"Your mother, Count Corti—poor lady—how she has suffered! But what happiness there is in store for her!" And again: "How wonderful the escape from the falsehoods of the Prophet! There is no love like Christ's love unless—unless it be a mother's."

At the conclusion, her chin rested in the soft palm of her hand, and the hand, unjewelled, was white as marble just carven, and, like the arm, a wonder of grace. Of what was she thinking?—Of him? Had he at last made an impression upon her? What trifles serve the hope of lovers! At length she asked:

"Then, O Count, thou wert his playmate in childhood?"

A bitter pang struck him—that pensiveness was for Mahommed—yet he answered: "I was nearest him until he took up his father's sword."

"Is he the monster they call him?"

"To his enemies, yes—and to all in the road to his desires, yes—but to his friends there was never such a friend."

"Has he heart to"—

The omission, rather than the question, hurt him—still he returned:

"Yes, once he really loves."

Then she appeared to awake.

"To the narrative now—Forgive my wandering."

The opportunity to return was a relief to him, and he hastened to improve it.

"I thank you for grace, O Princess, and am reminded of the pressure of time. I must to the gate again with the Emperor… This is my proposal. Instead of biding here to be taken by some rapacious hordesman, go with me to Sancta Sophia, and when the Sultan comes thither—as he certainly will—deliver yourself to him. If, before his arrival, the plunderers force the doors of the holy house, I will stand with you, not, Princess, as Count Corti the Italian, but Mirza the Emir and Janissary, appointed by the Sultan to guard you. My Berbers will help the assumption."

He had spoken clearly, yet she hesitated.

"Ah," he said, "you doubt Mahommed. He will be upon honor. The glory–winners, Princess, are those always most in awe of the judgment of the world."

Yet she sat silent.

"Or is it I who am in your doubt?"

"No, Count. But my household—my attendants—the poor creatures are trembling now—some of them, I was about saying, are of the noblest families in Byzantium, daughters of senators and lords of the court. I

cannot desert them—no, Count Corti, not to save myself. The baseness would be on my soul forever. They must share my fortune, or I their fate."

Still she was thinking of others!

More as a worshipper than lover, the Count replied: "I will include them in my attempt to save you. Surely Heaven will help me, for your sake, O Princess."

"And I can plead for them with him. Count Corti, I will go with you."

The animation with which she spoke faded in an instant.

"But thou—O my friend, if thou shouldst fall?"

"Nay, let us be confident. If Heaven does not intend your escape, it would be merciful, O beloved lady, did it place me where no report of your mischance and sorrows can reach me. Looking at the darkest side, should I not come for you, go nevertheless to the Church. Doubt not hearing of the entry of the Turks. Seek Mahommed, if possible, and demand his protection. Tell him, I, Mirza the Emir, counselled you. On the other side, be ready to accompany me. Make preparation to–night—have a chair at hand, and your household assembled—for when I come, time will be scant… And now, God be with you! I will not say be brave—be trustful."

She extended her hand, and he knelt, and kissed it.

"I will pray for you, Count Corti."

"Heaven will hear you."

He went out, and rejoining the Emperor, rode with him from the Church to Blacherne.

CHAPTER XII

THE ASSAULT

The bonfires of the hordes were extinguished about the time the Christian company said their farewells after the last supper in the Very High Residence, and the hordes themselves appeared to be at rest, leaving Night to reset her stars serenely bright over the city, the sea, and the campania.

To the everlasting honor of that company, be it now said, they could under cover of the darkness have betaken themselves to the ships and escaped; yet they went to their several posts. Having laid their heads upon the breast of the fated Emperor, and pledged him their lives, there is no account of one in craven refuge at the break of day. The Emperor's devotion seems to have been a communicable flame.

This is the more remarkable when it is remembered that in the beginning the walls were relied upon to offset the superiority of the enemy in numbers, while now each knight and man–at–arms knew the vanity of that reliance—knew himself, in other words, one of scant five thousand men—to such diminished roll had the besieged been reduced by wounds, death and desertion—who were to muster on the ruins of the outer wall, or in the breaches of the inner, and strive against two hundred and fifty thousand goaded by influences justly considered the most powerful over ferocious natures—religious fanaticism and the assurance of booty without limit. The silence into which the Turkish host was sunk did not continue a great while. The Greeks on the landward walls became aware of a general murmur, followed shortly by a rumble at times vibrant—so the earth complains of the beating it receives from vast bodies of men and animals in hurried passage.

"The enemy is forming," said John Grant to his associate Carystos, the archer.

Minotle, the Venetian bayle, listening from the shattered gate of Adrianople, gave order: "Arouse the men. The Turks are coming."

Justiniani, putting the finishing touches upon his masked repairs behind what had been the alley or passage between the towers Bagdad and St. Romain, was called to by his lookout: "Come up, Captain—the infidels are stirring—they seem disposed to attack."

"No," the Captain returned, after a brief observation, "they will not attack to–night—they are getting ready."

None the less, without relieving his working parties, he placed his command in station.

At Selimbria and the Golden Gate the Christians stood to arms. So also between the gates. Then a deep hush descended upon the mighty works—mighty despite the slugging they had endured—and the silence was loaded with anxiety.

For such of my readers as have held a night–watch expectant of battle at disadvantage in the morning it will be easy putting themselves in the place of these warders at bay; they can think their thoughts, and hear the heavy beating of their hearts; they will remember how long the hours were, and how the monotony of the waiting gnawed at their spirits until they prayed for action, action. On the other hand, those without the experience will wonder how men can bear up bravely in such conditions— and that is a wonder.

In furtherance of his plan, Mahommed drew in his irregulars, and massed them in the space between the intrenchment and the ditch; and by bringing his machines and small guns nearer the walls, he menaced the whole front of defence with a line amply provided with scaling ladders and mantelets. Behind the line he stationed bodies of horsemen to arrest fugitives, and turn them back to the fight. His reserves occupied the intrenchments. The Janissaries were retained at his quarters opposite St. Romain.

The hordes were clever enough to see what the arrangement portended for them, and they at first complained.

"What, grumble, do they?" Mahommed answered. "Ride, and tell them I say the first choice in the capture belongs to the first over the walls. Theirs the fault if the city be not an empty nest to all who come after them."

The earth in its forward movement overtook the moon just before daybreak; then in the deep hush of expectancy and readiness, the light being sufficient to reveal to the besieged the assault couchant below them, a long–blown flourish was sounded by the Turkish heralds from the embrasure of the great gun.

Other trumpeters took up the signal, and in a space incredibly short it was repeated everywhere along the line of attack. A thunder of drums broke in upon the music. Up rose the hordes, the archers and slingers, and the ladder bearers, and forward, like a bristling wave, they rushed, shouting every man as he pleased. In the same instant the machines and light guns were set in operation. Never had the old walls been assailed by such a tempest of bolts, arrows, stones and bullets—never had their echoes been awakened by an equal explosion of human voices, instruments of martial music, and cannon. The warders were not surprised by the assault so much as by its din and fury; and when directly the missiles struck them, thickening into an uninterrupted pouring rain, they cowered behind the merlons, and such other shelters as they could find.

This did not last long—it was like the shiver and gasp of one plunged suddenly into icy water. The fugitives were rallied, and brought back to their weapons, and to replying in kind; and having no longer to shoot with care, the rabble fusing into a compact target, especially on the outer edge of the ditch, not a shaft, or bolt, or stone, or ball from culverin went amiss. Afterwhile, their blood warming with the work, and the dawn breaking, they could see their advantage of position, and the awful havoc they were playing; then they too knew the delight in killing which more than anything else proves man the most ferocious of brutes.

The movement of the hordes was not a dash wholly without system—such an inference would be a great mistake. There was no pretence of alignment or order—there never is in such attacks—forlorn hopes, receiving the signal, rush on, each individual to his own endeavor; here,

nevertheless, the Pachas and Beys directed the assault, permitting no blind waste of effort. They hurled their mobs at none but the weak places—here a breach, there a dismantled gate.

Thousands were pushed headlong into the moat. The ladders then passed down to such of them as had footing were heavy, but they were caught willingly; if too short, were spliced; once planted so as to bring the coping of the wall in reach, they swarmed with eager adventurers, who, holding their shields and pikes overhead, climbed as best they could. Those below cheered their comrades above, and even pushed them up.

"The spoils—think of the spoils—the gold, the women!… *Allah–il–Allah!*… Up, up—it is the way to Paradise!"

Darts and javelins literally cast the climbers in a thickened shade. Sometimes a ponderous stone plunging down cleaned a ladder from top to bottom; sometimes, waiting until the rounds were filled, the besieged applied levers, and swung a score and more off helpless and shrieking. No matter—*Allah–il–Allah!* The living were swift to restore and attempt the fatal ascents.

Every one dead and every one wounded became a serviceable clod; rapidly as the dump and cumber of humanity filled the moat the ladders extended their upward reach; while drum–beat, battle–cry, trumpet's blare, and the roar of cannon answering cannon blent into one steady all–smothering sound.

In the stretches of space between gates, where the walls and towers were intact, the strife of the archers and slingers was to keep the Greeks occupied, lest they should reenforce the defenders hard pressed elsewhere.

During the night the blockading vessels had been warped close into the shore, and, the wall of the seafront being lower than those on the land side, the crews, by means of platforms erected on the decks, engaged the besieged from a better level. There also, though attempts at escalade were frequent, the object was chiefly to hold the garrison in place.

In the harbor, particularly at the Wood Gate, already mentioned as battered out of semblance to itself by the large gun on the floating battery,

the Turks exerted themselves to effect a landing; but the Christian fleet interposed, and there was a naval battle of varying fortune.

So, speaking generally, the city was wrapped in assault; and when the sun at last rode up into the clear sky above the Asiatic heights, streets, houses, palaces, churches—the hills, in fact, from the sea to the Tower of Isaac—were shrouded in ominous vapor, through which such of the people as dared go abroad flitted pale and trembling; or if they spoke to each other, it was to ask in husky voices, What have you from the gates?

Passing now to the leading actors in this terrible tragedy. Mahommed retired to his couch early the night previous. He knew his orders were in course of execution by chiefs who, on their part, knew the consequences of failure. The example made of the Admiral in command of the fleet the day the five relieving Christian galleys won the port was fresh in memory.**[61]**

"To–morrow, to–morrow," he kept repeating, while his pages took off his armor, and laid the pieces aside. "To–morrow, to–morrow," lingered in his thoughts, when, his limbs stretched out comfortably on the broad bronze cot which served him for couch, sleep crept in as to a tired child, and laid its finger of forgetfulness upon his eyelids. The repetition was as when we run through the verse of a cheerful song, thinking it out silently, and then recite the chorus aloud. Once he awoke, and, sitting up, listened. The mighty host which had its life by his permission was quiet—even the horses in their apartment seemed mindful that the hour was sacred to their master. Falling to sleep again, he muttered: "To–morrow, to–morrow—Irene and glory. I have the promise of the stars."

To Mahommed the morrow was obviously but a holiday which was bringing him the kingly part in a joyous game—a holiday too slow in coming.

About the third hour after midnight he was again awakened. A man stood by his cot imperfectly shading the light of a lamp with his hand.

"Prince of India!" exclaimed Mahommed, rising to a sitting posture.

"It is I, my Lord."

"What time is it?"

The Prince gave him the hour.

"Is it so near the break of day?" Mahommed yawned. "Tell me"—he fixed his eyes darkly on the visitor—"tell me first why thou art here?"

"I will, my Lord, and truly. I wished to see if you could sleep. A common soul could not. It is well the world has no premonitory sense."

"Why so?"

"My Lord has all the qualities of a conqueror."

Mahommed was pleased.

"Yes, I will make a great day of to–morrow. But, Prince of India, what shadows are disturbing thee? Why art thou not asleep?"

"I too have a part in the day, my Lord."

"What part?"

"I will fight, and"—

Mahommed interrupted him with a laugh.

"Thou!" and he looked the stooped figure over from head to foot.

"My Lord has two hands—I have four—I will show them."

Returning to his apartment, the Prince reappeared with Nilo.

"Behold, my Lord!"

The black was in the martial attire of a king of Kash–Cush—feathered coronet, robe of blue and red hanging from shoulder to heel, body under the robe naked to the waist, assegai in the oft–wrapped white sash, skirt to the knees glittering with crescents and buttons of silver, sandals beaded with pearls. On his left arm depended a shield rimmed and embossed with brass; in his right hand he bore a club knotted, and of weight to fell a bull at a blow. Without the slightest abashment, but rather as a superior, the King looked down at the young Sultan.

"I see—I understand—I welcome the four hands of the Prince of India," Mahommed said, vivaciously; then, giving a few moments of admiration to the negro, he turned, and asked:

"Prince, I have a motive for to–morrow—nay, by the cool waters of Paradise, I have many motives. Tell me thine. In thy speech and action I

have observed a hate for these Greeks deep as the Shintan's for God. Why? What have they done to thee?"

"They are Christians," the Jew returned, sullenly.

"That is good, Prince, very good—even the Prophet judged it a justification for cleaning the earth of the detestable sect—yet it is not enough. I am not old as thou"—Mahommed lost the curious gleam which shone in the visitor's eyes—"I am not old as thou art; still I know hate like thine must be from a private grievance."

"My Lord is right. To–morrow I will leave the herd to the herd. In the currents of the fight I will hunt but one enemy—Constantine. Judge thou my cause."

Then he told of Lael—of his love for her—of her abduction by Demedes—his supplication for the Emperor's assistance—the refusal.

"She was the child of my soul," he continued, passionately. "My interest in life was going out; she reinspired it. She was the promise of a future for me, as the morning star is of a gladsome day. I dreamed dreams of her, and upon her love builded hopes, like shining castles on high hills. Yet it was not enough that the Greek refused me his power to discover and restore her. She is now in restraint, and set apart to become the wife of a Christian—a Christian priest—may the fiends juggle for his ghost!—To–morrow I will punish the tyrant—I will give him a dog's death, and then seek her. Oh! I will find her—I will find her—and by the light there is in love, I will show him what all of hell there can be in one man's hate!"

For once the cunning of the Prince overreached itself. In the rush of passion he forgot the exquisite sensory gifts of the potentate with whom he was dealing; and Mahommed, observant even while shrinking from the malignant fire in the large eyes, discerned incoherencies in the tale, and that it was but half told; and while he was resolving to push his Messenger of the Stars to a full confession, a distant rumble invaded the tent, accompanied by a trample of feet outside.

"It is here, Prince of India—the day of Destiny. Let us get ready, thou for thy revenge, I for glory and"—Irene was on his tongue, but he suppressed the name. "Call my chamberlain and equerry… On the table there thou

mayst see my arms—a mace my ancestor Ilderim**[62]** bore at Nicopolis, and thy sword of Solomon… God is great, and the Jinn and the Stars on my side, what have we to fear?"

Within half an hour he rode out of the tent.

"Blows the wind to the city or from it?" he asked his chief Aga of Janissaries.

"Toward the city, my Lord."

"Exalted be the name of the Prophet! Set the Flower of the Faithful in order—a column of front wide as the breach in the gate—and bring the heralds. I shall be by the great gun."

Pushing his horse on the parapet, he beheld the space before him, down quite to the moat—every trace of the cemetery had disappeared—dark with hordes assembled and awaiting the signal. Satisfied, happy, he looked then toward the east. None better than he knew the stars appointed to go before the sun—their names were familiar to him—now they were his friends. At last a violet corona infinitely soft glimmered along the hill tops beyond Scutari.

"Stand out now," he cried to the five in their tabards of gold—"stand out now, and as ye hope couches in Paradise, blow—blow the stones out of their beds yonder—God was never so great!"

Then ensued the general advance which has been described, except that here, in front of St. Romain, there was no covering the assailants with slingers and archers. The fill in the ditch was nearly level with the outer bank, from which it may be described as an ascending causeway. This advantage encouraged the idea of pouring the hordesmen *en masse* over the hill composed of the ruins of what had been the towers of the gate.

There was an impulsive dash under incitement of a mighty drumming and trumpeting—a race, every man of the thousands engaged in it making for the causeway—a jam—a mob paralyzed by its numbers. They trampled on each other—they fought, and in the rebound were pitched in heaps down the perpendicular revetment on the right and left of the fill. Of those thus unfortunate the most remained where they fell, alive, perhaps, but

none the less an increasing dump of pikes, shields, and crushed bodies; and in the roar above them, cries for help, groans, and prayers were alike unheard and unnoticed.

All this Justiniani had foreseen. Behind loose stones on top of the hill, he had collected culverins, making, in modern phrase, a masked battery, and trained the pieces to sweep the causeway; with them, as a support, he mixed archers and pikemen. On either flank, moreover, he stationed companies similarly armed, extending them to the unbroken wall, so there was not a space in the breach undefended.

The Captain, on watch and expectant, heard the signal.

"To the Emperor at Blacherne," he bade; "and say the storm is about to break. Make haste." Then to his men: "Light the matches, and be ready to throw the stones down."

The hordesmen reached the edge of the ditch; that moment the guns were unmasked, and the Genoese leader shouted:

"Fire, my men!—*Christ and Holy Church!*"

Then from the Christian works it was bullet, bolt, stone, and shaft, making light of flimsy shield and surcoat of hide; still the hordesmen pushed on, a river breasting an obstruction. Now they were on the causeway. Useless facing about—behind them an advancing wall—on both sides the ditch. Useless lying down—that was to be smothered in bloody mire. Forward, forward, or die. What though the causeway was packed with dead and wounded?—though there was no foothold not slippery?—though the smell of hot blood filled every nostril?—though hands thrice strengthened by despair grappled the feet making stepping blocks of face and breast? The living pressed on leaping, stumbling, staggering; their howl, "Gold—spoils—women—slaves," answered from the smoking hill, "*Christ and Holy Church.*"

And now, the causeway crossed, the leading assailants gain the foot of the rough ascent. No time to catch breath—none to look for advantage—none to profit by a glance at the preparation to receive them—up they must go, and up they went. Arrows and javelins pierce them; stones crush them; the culverins spout fire in their faces, and, lifting them off their

uncertain footing, hurl them bodily back upon the heads and shields of their comrades. Along the brow of the rocky hill a mound of bodies arises wondrous quick, an obstacle to the warders of the pass who would shoot, and to the hordesmen a barrier.

Slowly the corona on the Scutarian hills deepened into dawn. The Emperor joined Justiniani. Count Corti came with him. There was an affectionate greeting.

"Your Majesty, the day is scarcely full born, yet see how Islam is rueing it."

Constantine, following Justiniani's pointing, peered once through the smoke; then the necessity of the moment caught him, and, taking post between guns, he plied his long lance upon the wretches climbing the rising mound, some without shields, some weaponless, most of them incapable of combat.

With the brightening of day the mound grew in height and width, until at length the Christians sallied out upon it to meet the enemy still pouring on.

An hour thus.

Suddenly, seized with a comprehension of the futility of their effort, the hordesmen turned, and rushed from the hill and the causeway.

The Christians suffered but few casualties; yet they would have gladly rested. Then, from the wall above the breach, whence he had used his bow, Count Corti descended hastily.

"Your Majesty," he said, his countenance kindled with enthusiasm, "the Janissaries are making ready."

Justiniani was prompt. "Come!" he shouted. "Come every one! We must have clear range for the guns. Down with these dead! Down with the living. No time for pity!"

Setting the example, presently the defenders were tossing the bodies of their enemies down the face of the hill.

On his horse, by the great gun, Mahommed had observed the assault, listening while the night yet lingered. Occasionally a courier rode to him

with news from this Pacha or that one. He heard without excitement, and returned invariably the same reply:

"Tell him to pour the hordes in."

At last an officer came at speed.

"Oh, my Lord, I salute you. The city is won."

It was clear day then, yet a light not of the morning sparkled in Mahommed's eyes. Stooping in his saddle, he asked: "What sayest thou? Tell me of it, but beware—if thou speakest falsely, neither God nor Prophet shall save thee from impalement to the roots of thy tongue."

"As I have to tell my Lord what I saw with my own eyes, I am not afraid… My Lord knows that where the palace of Blacherne begins on the south there is an angle in the wall. There, while our people were feigning an assault to amuse the Greeks, they came upon a sunken gate"—

"The Cercoporta—I have heard of it."

"My Lord has the name. Trying it, they found it unfastened and unguarded, and, pushing through a darkened passage, discovered they were in the Palace. Mounting to the upper floor, they attacked the unbelievers. The fighting goes on. From room to room the Christians resist. They are now cut off, and in a little time the quarter will be in our possession."

Mahommed spoke to Kalil: "Take this man, and keep him safely. If he has spoken truly, great shall be his reward; if falsely, better he were not his mother's son." Then to one of his household: "Come hither… Go to the sunken gate Cercoporta, pass in, and find the chief now fighting in the palace of Blacherne. Tell him I, Mahommed, require that he leave the Palace to such as may follow him, and march and attack the defenders of this gate, St. Romain, in the rear. He shall not stop to plunder. I give him one hour in which to do my bidding. Ride thou now as if a falcon led thee. For Allah and life!"

Next he called his Aga of Janissaries.

"Have the hordes before this gate retired. They have served their turn; they have made the ditch passable, and the *Gabours* are faint with killing them. Observe, and when the road is cleared let go with the Flower of the

Faithful. A province to the first through; and this the battle–cry: *Allah–il–Allah!* They will fight under my eye. Minutes are worth kingdoms. Go thou, and let go."

Always in reserve, always the last resort in doubtful battle, always the arm with which the Sultans struck the finishing blow, the Janissaries thus summoned to take up the assault were in discipline, spirit, and splendor of appearance the *elite* corps of the martial world.

Riding to the front, the Aga halted to communicate Mahommed's orders. Down the columns the speech was passed.

The Flower of the Faithful were in three divisions dismounted. Throwing off their clumsy gowns, they stood forth in glittering mail, and shaking their brassy shields in air, shouted the old salute: "*Live the Padishah! Live the Padishah!*"

The road to the gate was cleared; then the Aga galloped back, and when abreast of the yellow flag of the first division, he cried: "*Allah–il–Allah!* Forward!"

And drum and trumpet breaking forth, a division moved down in column of fifties. Slowly at first, but solidly, and with a vast stateliness it moved. So at Pharsalia marched the legion Caesar loved—so in decision of heady fights strode the Old Guard of the world's last Conqueror.

Approaching the ditch, the fresh assailants set up the appointed battle–cry, and quickening the step to double time rushed over the terrible causeway.

Mahommed then descended to the ditch, and remained there mounted, the sword of Solomon in his hand, the mace of Ilderim at his saddle bow; and though hearing him was impossible, the Faithful took fire from his fire—enough that they were under his eye.

The feat attempted by the hordes was then repeated, except now there was order in disorder. The machine, though shaken and disarranged, kept working on, working up. Somehow its weight endured. Slowly, with all its drench and cumber, the hill was surmounted. Again a mound arose in front

of the battery—again the sally, and the deadly ply of pikes from the top of the mound.

The Emperor's lance splintered; he fought with a pole–axe; still even he became sensible of a whelming pressure. In the gorge, the smoke, loaded with lime–dust, dragged rather than lifted; no man saw down it to the causeway; yet the ascending din and clamor, possessed of the smiting power of a gust of wind, told of an endless array coming.

There was not time to take account of time; but at last a Turkish shield appeared over the ghastly rampart, glimmering as the moon glimmers through thick vapor. Thrusts in scores were made at it, yet it arose; then a Janissary sprang up on the heap, singing like a muezzin, and shearing off the heads of pikes as reapers shear green rye. He was a giant in stature and strength. Both Genoese and Greeks were disposed to give him way. The Emperor rallied them. Still the Turk held his footing, and other Turks were climbing to his support. Now it looked as if the crisis were come, now as if the breach were lost.

In the last second a cry *For Christ and Irene* rang through the melee, and Count Corti, leaping from a gun, confronted the Turk.

"Ho, Son of Ouloubad! Hassan, Hassan!"**[63]** he shouted, in the familiar tongue.

"Who calls me?" the giant asked, lowering his shield, and gazing about in surprise.

"I call you—I, Mirza the Emir. Thy time has come. *Christ and Irene. Now!*"

With the word the Count struck the Janissary fairly on the flat cap with his axe, bringing him to his knees. Almost simultaneously a heavy stone descended upon the dazed man from a higher part of the wall, and he rolled backward down the steep.

Constantine and Justiniani, with others, joined the Count, but too late. Of the fifty comrades composing Hassan's file, thirty mounted the rampart. Eighteen of them were slain in the bout. Corti raged like a lion; but up

rushed the survivors of the next file—and the next—and the vantage–point was lost. The Genoese, seeing it, said:

"Your Majesty, let us retire."

"Is it time?"

"We must get a ditch between us and this new horde, or we are all dead men."

Then the Emperor shouted: "Back, every one! For love of Christ and Holy Church, back to the galley!"

The guns, machines, store of missiles, and space occupied by the battery were at once abandoned. Constantine and Corti went last, facing the foe, who warily paused to see what they had next to encounter.

The secondary defence to which the Greeks resorted consisted of the hulk brought up, as we have seen, by Count Corti, planted on its keel squarely in rear of the breach, and filled with stones. From the hulk, on right and left, wings of uncemented masonry extended to the main wall in form thus:

[Illustration]

A ditch fronted the line fifteen feet in width and twelve in depth, provided with movable planks for hasty passage. Culverins were on the hulk, with ammunition in store.

Greatly to the relief of the jaded Christians, who, it is easy believing, stood not on the order of going, they beheld the reserves, under Demetrius Palaeologus and Nicholas Giudalli, in readiness behind the refuge.

The Emperor, on the deck, raised the visor of his helmet, and looked up at an Imperial flag drooping in the stagnant air from a stump of the mast. Whatever his thought or feeling, no one could discern on his countenance an unbecoming expression. The fact, of which he must have been aware, that this stand taken ended his empire forever, had not shaken his resolution or confidence. To Demetrius Palaeologus, who had lent a hand helping him up the galley's side, he said: "Thank you, kinsman. God may still be trusted. Open fire."

The Janissaries, astonished at the new and strange defence, would have retreated, but could not; the files ascending behind drove them forward. At the edge of the ditch the foremost of them made a despairing effort to resist the pressure rushing them to their fate—down they went in mass, in their last service no better than the hordesmen—clods they became—clods in bright harness instead of bull–hide and shaggy astrakhan.

From the wings, bolts and stones; from the height of the wall, bolts and stones; from the hulk, grapeshot; and the rattle upon the shields of the Faithful was as the passing of empty chariots over a Pompeiian street. Imprecations, prayers, yells, groans, shrieks, had lodgement only in the ear of the Most Merciful. The open maw of a ravenous monster swallowing the column fast as Mahommed down by the great moat drove it on—such was the new ditch.

Yet another, the final horror. When the ditch was partially filled, the Christians brought jugs of the inflammable liquid contributed to the defence by John Grant; and cast them down on the writhing heap. Straightway the trench became a pocket of flame, or rather an oven from which the smell of roasting human flesh issued along with a choking cloud!

The besieged were exultant, as they well might be—they were more than holding the redoubtable Flower of the Faithful at bay—there was even a merry tone in their battle–cry. About that time a man dismounted from a foaming horse, climbed the rough steps to the deck of the galley, and delivered a message to the Emperor.

"Your Majesty. John Grant, Minotle the bayle, Carystos, Langasco, and Jerome the Italian are slain. Blacherne is in possession of the Turks, and they are marching this way. The hordes are in the streets. I saw them, and heard the bursting of doors, and the screams of women."

Constantine crossed himself three times, and bowed his head.

Justiniani turned the color of ashes, and exclaimed:

"We are undone—undone! All is lost!" And that his voice was hoarse did not prevent the words being overheard. The fire slackened—ceased. Men

fighting jubilantly dropped their arms, and took up the cry—"All is lost! The hordes are in, the hordes are in!"

Doubtless Count Corti's thought sped to the fair woman waiting for him in the chapel, yet he kept clear head.

"Your Majesty," he said, "my Berbers are without. I will take them, and hold the Turks in check while you draw assistance from the walls. Or"—he hesitated, "or I will defend your person to the ships. It is not too late."

Indeed, there was ample time for the Emperor's escape. The Berbers were keeping his horse with Corti's. He had but to mount, and ride away. No doubt he was tempted. There is always some sweetness in life, especially to the blameless. He raised his head, and said to Justiniani:

"Captain, my guard will remain here. To keep the galley they have only to keep the fire alive in the ditch. You and I will go out to meet the enemy."… Then he addressed himself to Corti: "To horse, Count, and bring Theophilus Palaeologus. He is on the wall between this gate and the gate Selimbria… Ho, Christian gentlemen," he continued, to the soldiers closing around him, "all is not lost. The Bochiardi at the Adrianople gate have not been heard from. To fly from an unseen foe were shameful, We are still hundreds strong. Let us descend, and form. God cannot"—

That instant Justiniani uttered a loud cry, and dropped the axe he was holding. An arrow had pierced the scales of his gauntlet, and disabled his hand. The pain, doubtless, was great, and he started hastily as if to descend from the deck. Constantine called out:

"Captain, Captain!"

"Give me leave, Your Majesty, to go and have this wound dressed."

"Where, Captain?"

"To my ship."

The Emperor threw his visor up—his face was flushed—in his soul indignation contended with astonishment.

"No, Captain, the wound cannot he serious; and besides, how canst thou get to thy ships?"

Justiniani looked over the bulwark of the vessel. The alley from the gate ran on between houses abutting the towers. A ball from one of Mahommed's largest guns had passed through the right–hand building, leaving a ragged fissure. Thither the Captain now pointed.

"God opened that breach to let the Turks in. I will go out by it."

He stayed no longer, but went down the steps, and in haste little short of a run disappeared through the fissure so like a breach.

The desertion was in view of his Genoese, of whom a few followed him, but not all. Many who had been serving the guns took swords and pikes, and gathering about the Emperor, cried out:

"Give orders, Your Majesty. We will bide with you."

He returned them a look full of gratitude.

"I thank you, gentlemen. Let us go down, and join our shields across the street. To my guard I commit defence of the galley."

Unfastening the purple half–cloak at his back, and taking off his helmet, he called to his sword–bearer: "Here, take thou these, and give me my sword… Now, gallant gentlemen—now, my brave countrymen—we will put ourselves in the keeping of Heaven. Come!"

They had not all gained the ground, however, when there arose a clamor in their front, and the hordesmen appeared, and blocking up the passage, opened upon them with arrows and stones, while such as had javelins and swords attacked them hand to hand.

The Christians behaved well, but none better than Constantine. He fought with strength, and in good countenance; his blade quickly reddened to the hilt.

"Strike, my countrymen, for city and home. Strike, every one, for *Christ and Holy Church!*"

And answering him: "*Christ and Holy Church!*" they all fought as they had strength, and their swords were also reddened to the hilt. Quarter was not asked; neither was it given. Theirs to hold the ground, and they held it. They laid the hordesmen out over it in scattered heaps which grew, and presently became one long heap the width of the alley; and they too fell,

but, as we are willing to believe, unconscious of pain because lapped in the delirium of battle–fever.

Five minutes—ten—fifteen—then through the breach by which Justiniani ingloriously fled Theophilus Palaeologus came with bared brand to vindicate his imperial blood by nobly dying; and with him came Count Corti, Francesco de Toledo, John the Dalmatian, and a score and more Christian gentlemen who well knew the difference between an honorable death and a dishonored life.

Steadily the sun arose. Half the street was in its light, the other half in its shade; yet the struggle endured; nor could any man have said God was not with the Christians. Suddenly a louder shouting arose behind them. They who could, looked to see what it meant, and the bravest stood stone still at sight of the Janissaries swarming on the galley. Over the roasting bodies of their comrades, undeterred by the inextinguishable fire, they had crossed the ditch, and were slaying the imperial body–guard. A moment, and they would be in the alley, and then—

Up rose a wail: "The Janissaries, the Janissaries! *Kyrie Eleison!*" Through the knot of Christians it passed—it reached Constantine in the forefront, and he gave way to the antagonist with whom he was engaged.

"God receive my soul!" he exclaimed; and dropping his sword, he turned about, and rushed back with wide extended arms.

"Friends—countrymen!—Is there no Christian to kill me?"

Then they understood why he had left his helmet off.

While those nearest stared at him, their hearts too full of pity to do him the last favor one can ask of another, from the midst of the hordesmen there came a man of singular unfitness for such a scene—indeed a delicate woman had not been more out of place—for he was small, stooped, withered, very white haired, very pale, and much bearded—a black velvet cap on his head, and a gown of the like about his body, unarmed, and in every respect unmartial. He seemed to glide in amongst the Christians as he had glided through the close press of the Turks; and as the latter had given him way, so now the sword points of the Christians went down—

men in the heat of action forgot themselves, and became bystanders—such power was there in the unearthly eyes of the apparition.

"Is there no Christian to kill me?" cried the Emperor again.

The man in velvet stood before him.

"Prince of India!"

"You know me? It is well; for now I know you are not beyond remembering." The voice was shrill and cutting, yet it shrilled and cut the sharper.

"Remember the day I called on you to acknowledge God, and give him his due of worship. Remember the day I prayed you on my knees to lend me your power to save my child, stolen for a purpose by all peoples held unholy. Behold your executioner!"

He stepped back, and raised a hand; and ere one of those standing by could so much as cry to God, Nilo, who, in the absorption of interest in his master, had followed him unnoticed—Nilo, gorgeous in his barbarisms of Kash–Cush, sprang into the master's place. He did not strike; but with infinite cruel cunning of hand—no measurable lapse of time ensuing—drew the assegai across the face of the astonished Emperor. Constantine—never great till that moment of death, but then great forever—fell forward upon his shield, calling in strangled utterance: "God receive my soul!"

The savage set his foot upon the mutilated countenance, crushing it into a pool of blood. An instant, then through the petrified throng, knocking them right and left, Count Corti appeared.

"*For Christ and Irene!*" he shouted, dashing the spiked boss of his shield into Nilo's eyes—down upon the feathered coronal he brought his sword—and the negro fell sprawling upon the Emperor.

Oblivious to the surroundings, Count Corti, on his knees, raised the Emperor's head, slightly turning the face—one look was enough. "His soul is sped!" he said; and while he was tenderly replacing the head, a hand grasped his cap. He sprang to his feet. Woe to the intruder, if an enemy! The sword which had known no failure was drawn back to thrust— above the advanced foot the shield hung in ready poise—between him and the

challenger there was only a margin of air and the briefest interval of time —his breath was drawn, and his eyes gleamed with vengeful murder —but —some power invisible stayed his arm, and into his memory flashed the lightning of recognition.

"Prince of India," he shouted, "never wert thou nearer death!"

"Thou—liest! Death—and—I"—

The words were long drawn between gasps, and the speech was never finished. The tongue thickened, then paralyzed. The features, already distorted with passion, swelled, and blackened horribly. The eyes rolled back—the hands flew up, the fingers apart and rigid—the body rocked—stiffened—then fell, sliding from the Count's shield across the dead Emperor.

The combat meantime had gone on. Corti, with a vague feeling that the Prince's flight of soul was a mystery in keeping with his life, took a second to observe him, and muttered: "Peace to him also!"

Looking about him then, he was made aware that the Christians, attacked in front and rear, were drawing together around the body of Constantine—that their resistance was become the last effort of brave men hopeless except of the fullest possible payment for their lives. This was succeeded by a conviction of duty done on his part, and of every requirement of honor fulfilled; thereupon with a great throb of heart, his mind reverted to the Princess Irene waiting for him in the chapel. He must go to her. But how? And was it not too late?

There are men whose wits are supernaturally quickened by danger. The Count, pushing through the intervening throng, boldly presented himself to the Janissaries, shouting while warding the blows they aimed at him:

"Have done, O madmen! See you not I am your comrade, Mirza the Emir? Have done, I say, and let me pass. I have a message for the Padishah!"

He spoke Turkish, and having been an idol in the barracks—their best swordsman—envied, and at the same time beloved—they knew him, and with acclamations opened their files, and let him pass.

By the fissure which had served Justiniani, he escaped from the terrible alley, and finding his Berbers and his horse, rode with speed for the residence of the Princess Irene.

Not a Christian survived the combat. Greek, Genoese, Italian lay in ghastly composite with hordesmen and mailed Moslems around the Emperor. In dying they had made good their battle–cry—*For Christ and Holy Church!* Let us believe they will yet have their guerdon.

About an hour after the last of them had fallen, when the narrow passage was deserted by the living—the conquerors having moved on in search of their hire—the Prince of India aroused, and shook himself free of the corpses cumbering him. Upon his knees he gazed at the dead—then at the place—then at the sky. He rubbed his hands—made sure he was sound of person—he seemed uncertain, not of life, but of himself. In fact, he was asking, Who am I? And the question had reference to the novel sensations of which he was conscious. What was it coursing through his veins? Wine? —Elixir?—Some new principle which, hidden away amongst the stores of nature, had suddenly evolved for him? The weights of age were gone. In his body—bones, arms, limbs, muscles—he recognized once more the glorious impulses of youth; but his mind—he started—the ideas which had dominated him were beginning to return—and memory! It surged back upon him, and into its wonted chambers, like a wave which, under pressure of a violent wind, has been momentarily driven from a familiar shore. He saw, somewhat faintly at first, the events which had been promontories and lofty peaks cast up out of the level of his long existence. Then THAT DAY and THAT EVENT! How distinctly they reappeared to him! They must be the same—must be—for he beheld the multitude on its way to Calvary, and the Victim tottering under the Cross; he heard the Tribune ask, "Ho, is this the street to Golgotha?" He heard his own answer, "I will guide you;" and he spit upon the fainting Man of Sorrows, and struck him. And then the words—"TARRY THOU TILL I COME!" identified him to himself. He looked at his hands—they were black with what had been some other man's life–blood, but under the stain the skin was smooth—a little water would make them white. And what was that upon his breast? Beard—beard black as a raven's wing! He plucked a lock of hair from his head. It, too,

was thick with blood, but it was black. Youth—youth—joyous, bounding, eager, hopeful youth was his once more! He stood up, and there was no creak of rust in the hinges of his joints; he knew he was standing inches higher in the sunlit air; and a cry burst from him—"O God, I give thanks!" The hymn stopped there, for between him and the sky, as if it were ascending transfigured, he beheld the Victim of the Crucifixion; and the eyes, no longer sad, but full of accusing majesty, were looking downward at him, and the lips were in speech: "TARRY THOU TILL I COME!" He covered his face with his hands. Yes, yes, he had his youth back again, but it was with the old mind and nature—youth, that the curse upon him might, in the mortal sense, be eternal! And pulling his black hair with his young hands, wrenching at his black beard, it was given him to see he had undergone his fourteenth transformation, and that between this one and the last there was no lapse of connection. Old age had passed, leaving the conditions and circumstances of its going to the youth which succeeded. The new life in starting picked up and loaded itself with every burden and all the misery of the old. So now while burrowing, as it were, amongst dead men, his head upon the breast of the Emperor whom, treating Nilo as an instrument in his grip, he had slain, he thought most humanly of the effects of the transformation.

First of all, his personal identity was lost, and he was once more a Wanderer without an acquaintance, a friend, or a sympathizer on the earth. To whom could he now address himself with a hope of recognition? His heart went out primarily to Lael—he loved her. Suppose he found her, and offered to take her in his arms; she would repulse him. "Thou art not my father. He was old—thou art young." And Syama, whose bereavements of sense had recommended him for confidant in the event of his witnessing the dreaded circumstance just befallen—if he addressed himself to Syama, the faithful creature would deny him. "No; my master was old—his hair and beard were white—thou art a youth. Go hence." And then Mahommed, to whom he had been so useful in bringing additional empire, and a glory which time would make its own forever—did he seek Mahommed again—"Thou art not the Prince of India, my peerless Messenger of the Stars. He was old—his hair and beard were white—thou art a boy. Ho, guards,

take this impostor, and do with him as ye did with Balta–Ogli stretch him on the ground, and beat the breath out of him."

There is nothing comes to us, whether in childhood or age, so crushing as a sense of isolation. Who will deny it had to do with the marshalling of worlds, and the peopling them—with creation?

These reflections did but wait upon the impulse which still further identified him to himself—the impulse to go and keep going—and he cast about for solaces.

"It is the Judgment," he said, with a grim smile; "but my stores remain, and Hiram of Tyre is yet my friend. I have my experience of more than a thousand years, and with it youth again. I cannot make men better, and God refuses my services. Nevertheless I will devise new opportunities. The earth is round, and upon its other side there must be another world. Perhaps I can find some daring spirit equal to the voyage and discovery—some one Heaven may be more willing to favor. But this meeting place of the old continents"—he looked around him, and then to the sky—"with my farewell, I leave it the curse of the most accursed. The desired of nations, it shall be a trouble to them forever."

Then he saw Nilo under a load of corpses, and touched by remembrance of the poor savage's devotion, he uncovered him to get at his heart, which was still beating. Next he threw away his cap and gown, replaced them with a bloody tarbousche and a shaggy Angora mantle, selected a javelin, and sauntered leisurely on into the city. Having seen Constantinople pillaged by Christians, he was curious to see it now sacked by Moslems—there might be a further solace in the comparison.

CHAPTER XIII

MAHOMMED IN SANCTA SOPHIA

Count Corti, we may well believe, did not spare his own steed, or those of his Berbers; and there was a need of haste of which he was not aware upon setting out from St. Romain. The Turks had broken through the resistance of the Christian fleet in the harbor, and were surging into the city by the gate St. Peter (Phanar), which was perilously near the residence of the Princess Irene.

Already the spoil–seekers were making sure of their hire. More than once he dashed by groups of them hurrying along the streets in search of houses most likely to repay plundering. There were instances when he overtook hordesmen already happy in the possession of "strings of slaves;" that is to say, of Greeks, mostly women and children, tied by their hands to ropes, and driven mercilessly on. The wailing and prayers of the unfortunate smote the Count to the heart; he longed to deliver them; but he had given his best efforts to save them in the struggle to save the city, and had failed; now it would be a providence of Heaven could he rescue the woman waiting for him in such faith as was due his word and honor specially plighted to her. As the pillagers showed no disposition to interfere with him, he closed his eyes and ears to their brutalities, and sped forward.

The district in which the Princess dwelt was being overrun when he at last drew rein at her door. With a horrible dread, he alighted, and pushed in unceremoniously. The reception–room was empty. Was he too late? Or was she then in Sancta Sophia? He flew to the chapel, and blessed God and Christ and the Mother, all in a breath. She was before the altar in the midst of her attendants. Sergius stood at her side, and of the company they alone were perfectly self–possessed. A white veil lay fallen over her shoulders; save that, she was in unrelieved black. The pallor of her countenance,

caused, doubtless, by weeks of care and unrest, detracted slightly from the marvelous beauty which was hers by nature; but it seemed sorrow and danger only increased the gentle dignity always observable in her speech and manner.

"Princess Irene," he said, hastening forward, and reverently saluting her hand, "if you are still of the mind to seek refuge in Sancta Sophia, I pray you, let us go thither."

"We are ready," she returned. "But tell me of the Emperor."

The Count bent very low.

"Your kinsman is beyond insult and further humiliation. His soul is with God."

Her eyes glistened with tears, and partly to conceal her emotion she turned to the picture above the altar, and said, in a low voice, and brokenly:

"O Holy Mother, have thou his soul in thy tender care, and be with me now, going to what fate I know not."

The young women surrounded her, and on their knees filled the chapel with sobbing and suppressed wails. Striving for composure himself, the Count observed them, and was at once assailed by an embarrassment.

They were twenty and more. Each had a veil over her head; yet from the delicacy of their hands he could imagine their faces, while their rank was all too plainly certified by the elegance of their garments. As a temptation to the savages, their like was not within the walls. How was he to get them safely to the Church, and defend them there? He was used to military problems, and decision was a habit with him; still he was sorely tried—indeed, he was never so perplexed.

The Princess finished her invocation to the Holy Mother.

"Count Corti," she said, "I now place myself and these, my sisters in misfortune, under thy knightly care. Only suffer me to send for one other. —Go, Sergius, and bring Lael."

One other!

"Now God help me!" he cried, involuntarily; and it seemed he was heard.

"Princess," he returned, "the Turks have possession of the streets. On my way I passed them with prisoners whom they were driving, and they appeared to respect a right of property acquired. Perhaps they will be not less observant to me; wherefore bring other veils here—enough to bind these ladies two and two."

As she seemed hesitant, he added: "Pardon me, but in the streets you must all go afoot, to appearances captives just taken."

The veils were speedily produced, and the Princess bound her trembling companions in couples hand to hand; submitting finally to be herself tied to Lael. Then when Sergius was more substantially joined to the ancient Lysander, the household sallied forth.

A keener realization of the situation seized the gentler portion of the procession once they were in the street, and they there gave way to tears, sobs, and loud appeals to the Saints and Angels of Mercy.

The Count rode in front; four of his Berbers moved on each side; Sheik Hadifah guarded the rear; and altogether a more disconsolate company of captives it were hard imagining. A rope passing from the first couple to the last was the only want required to perfect the resemblance to the actual slave droves at the moment on nearly every thoroughfare in Constantinople.

The weeping cortege passed bands of pillagers repeatedly.

Once what may be termed a string in fact was met going in the opposite direction; women and children, and men and women were lashed together, like animals, and their lamentations were piteous. If they fell or faltered, they were beaten. It seemed barbarity could go no further.

Once the Count was halted. A man of rank, with a following at his heels, congratulated him in Turkish:

"O friend, thou hast a goodly capture."

The stranger came nearer.

"I will give you twenty gold pieces for this one," pointing to the Princess Irene, who, fortunately, could not understand him—"and fifteen for this one."

"Go thy way, and quickly," said Corti, sternly.

"Dost thou threaten me?"

"By the Prophet, yes—with my sword, and the Padishah."

"The Padishah! Oh, ho!" and the man turned pale. "God is great—I give him praise."

At last the Count alighted before the main entrance of the Church. By friendly chance, also—probably because the site was far down toward the sea, in a district not yet reached by the hordesmen—the space in front of the vestibule was clear of all but incoming fugitives; and he had but to knock at the door, and give the name of the Princess Irene to gain admission.

In the vestibule the party were relieved of their bonds; after which they passed into the body of the building, where they embraced each other, and gave praise aloud for what they considered a final deliverance from death and danger; in their transports, they kissed the marbles of the floor again and again.

While this affecting scene was going on, Corti surveyed the interior. The freest pen cannot do more than give the view with a clearness to barely stimulate the reader's imagination.

It was about eleven o'clock. The smoke of battle which had overlain the hills of the city was dissipated; so the sun, nearing high noon, poured its full of splendor across the vast nave in rays slanted from south to north, and a fine, almost impalpable dust hanging from the dome in the still air, each ray shone through it in vivid, half–prismatic relief against the shadowy parts of the structure. Such pillars in the galleries as stood in the paths of the sunbeams seemed effulgent, like emeralds and rubies. His eyes, however, refused everything except the congregation of people.

"O Heaven!" he exclaimed. "What is to become of these poor souls!"

Byzantium, it must be recalled, had had its triumphal days, when Greeks drew together, like Jews on certain of their holy occasions; undoubtedly the assemblages then were more numerous, but never had there been one so marked by circumstances. This was the funeral day of the Empire!

Let the reader try to recompose the congregation the Count beheld—civilians—soldiers—nuns—monks—monks bearded, monks shaven, monks tonsured—monks in high hats and loose veils, monks in gowns scarce distinguishable from gowns of women—monks by the thousand. Ah, had they but dared a manly part on the walls, the cause of the Christ for whom they affected such devotion would not have suffered the humiliation to which it was now going! As to the mass in general, let the reader think of the rich jostled by the poor—fine ladies careless if their robes took taint from the Lazarus' next them—servants for once at least on a plane with haughty masters—Senators and slaves—grandsires—mothers with their infants—old and young, high and low, all in promiscuous presence— society at an end—Sancta Sophia a universal last refuge. And by no means least strange, let the reader fancy the refugees on their knees, silent as ghosts in a tomb, except that now and then the wail of a child broke the awful hush, and gazing over their shoulders, not at the altar, but toward the doors of entrance; then let him understand that every one in the smother of assemblage—every one capable of thought—was in momentary expectation of a miracle.

Here and there moved priestly figures, holding crucifixes aloft, and halting at times to exhort in low voices: "Be not troubled, O dearly beloved of Christ! The angel will appear by the old column. If the powers of hell are not to prevail against the Church, what may men do against the sword of God?"

The congregation was waiting for the promised angel to rescue them from the Barbarians.

Of opinion that the chancel, or space within the railing of the apse opposite him, was a better position for his charge than the crowded auditorium, partly because he could more easily defend them there, and partly because Mahommed when he arrived would naturally look for the Princess near the altar, the Count, with some trouble, secured a place within it behind the brazen balustrade at the right of the gate. The invasion of the holy reserve by the Berbers was viewed askance, but submitted to; thereupon the Princess and her suite took to waiting and praying.

Afterwhile the doors in the east were barred by the janitor.

Still later there was knocking at them loud enough to be by authority. The janitor had become deaf.

Later still a yelling as of a mob out in the vestibule penetrated to the interior, and a shiver struck the expectant throng, less from a presentiment of evil at hand than a horrible doubt. An angel of the Lord would hardly adopt such an incongruous method of proclaiming the miracle done. A murmur of invocation began with those nearest the entrances, and ran from the floor to the galleries. As it spread, the shouting increased in volume and temper. Ere long the doors were assailed. The noise of a blow given with determination rang dreadful warning through the whole building, and the concourse arose.

The women shrieked: "The Turks! The Turks!"

Even the nuns who had been practising faith for years joined their lay sisters in crying: "The Turks! The Turks!"

The great, gowned, cowardly monks dropped their crucifixes, and, like the commoner sons of the Church, howled: "The Turks! The Turks!"

Finally the doors were battered in, and sure enough—there stood the hordesmen, armed and panoplied each according to his tribe or personal preference—each a most unlikely delivering angel.

This completed the panic.

In the vicinity of the ruined doors everybody, overcome by terror, threw himself upon those behind, and the impulsion thus started gained force while sweeping on. As ever in such cases, the weak were the sufferers. Children were overrun—infants dashed from the arms of mothers—men had need of their utmost strength—and the wisdom of the Count in seeking the chancel was proved. The massive brazen railing hardly endured the pressure when the surge reached it; but it stood, and the Princess and her household—all, in fact, within the chancel—escaped the crushing, but not the horror.

The spoilsmen were in strength, but they were prudently slow in persuading themselves that the Greeks were unarmed, and incapable of

defending the Church. Ere long they streamed in, and for the first time in the history of the edifice the colossal Christ on the ceiling above the altar was affronted by the slogan of Islam—*Allah–il–Allah*.

Strange now as it may appear to the reader, there is no mention in the chronicles of a life lost that day within the walls of Sancta Sophia. The victors were there for plunder, not vengeance, and believing there was more profit in slaves than any other kind of property, their effort was to save rather than kill. The scene was beyond peradventure one of the cruelest in history, but the cruelty was altogether in taking possession of captives.

Tossing their arms of whatever kind upon their backs, the savages pushed into the pack of Christians to select whom they would have. We may be sure the old, sick, weakly, crippled, and very young were discarded, and the strong and vigorous chosen. Remembering also how almost universally the hordes were from the East, we may be sure a woman was preferred to a man, and a pretty woman to an ugly one.

The hand shrinks from trying to depict the agonies of separation which ensued—mothers torn from their children, wives from husbands—their shrieks, entreaties, despair—the mirthful brutality with which their pitiful attempts at resistance were met—the binding and dragging away—the last clutch of love—the final disappearance. It is only needful to add that the rapine involved the galleries no less than the floor. All things considered, the marvel is that the cry—there was but one, just as the sounds of many waters are but one to the ear—which then tore the habitual silence of the august temple should have ever ceased—and it would not if, in its duration, human sympathy were less like a flitting echo.

Next to women, the monks were preferred, and the treatment they received was not without its touches of grim humor. Their cowls were snatched off, and bandied about, their hats crushed over their ears, their veils stuffed in their mouths to stifle their outcries, their rosaries converted into scourges; and the laughter when a string of them passed to the doors was long and loud. They had pulled their monasteries down upon themselves. If the Emperor, then lying in the bloody alley of St. Romain,

dead through their bigotry, superstition, and cowardice, had been vengeful in the slightest degree, a knowledge of the judgment come upon them so soon would have been at least restful to his spirit.

It must not be supposed Count Corti was indifferent while this appalling scene was in progress. The chancel, he foresaw, could not escape the foray. There was the altar, loaded with donatives in gold and precious stones, a blazing pyramidal invitation. When the doors were burst in, he paused a moment to see if Mahommed were coming.

"The hordes are here, O Princess, but not the Sultan."

She raised her veil, and regarded him silently.

"I see now but one resort. As Mirza the Emir, I must meet the pillagers by claiming the Sultan sent me in advance to capture and guard you for" him.""

"We are at mercy, Count Corti," she replied. "Heaven deal with you as you deal with us."

"If the ruse fails, Princess, I can die for you. Now tie yourselves as before—two and two, hand to hand. It may be they will call on me to distinguish such as are my charge."

She cast a glance of pity about her.

"And these, Count—these poor women not of my house, and the children — can you not save them also?"

"Alas, dear lady! The Blessed Mother must be their shield."

While the veils were being applied, the surge against the railing took place, leaving a number of dead and fainting across it.

"Hadifah," the Count called out, "clear the way to yon chair against the wall."

The Sheik set about removing the persons blockading the space, and greatly affected by their condition, the Princess interceded for them.

"Nay, Count, disturb them not. Add not to their terror, I pray."

But the Count was a soldier; in case of an affray, he wanted the advantage of a wall at his back.

"Dear lady, it was the throne of your fathers, now yours. I will seat you there. From it you can best treat with the Lord Mahommed."

Ere long some of the hordes—half a dozen or more—came to the chancel gate. They were of the rudest class of Anatolian shepherds, clad principally in half–cloaks of shaggy goat skin. Each bore at his back a round buckler, a bow, and a clumsy quiver of feathered arrows. Awed by the splendor of the altar and its surroundings, they stopped; then, with shouts, they rushed at the tempting display, unmindful of the living spoils crouched on the floor dumb with terror. Others of a like kind reenforced them, and there was a fierce scramble. The latest comers turned to the women, and presently discovered the Princess Irene sitting upon the throne. One, more eager than the rest, was indisposed to respect the Berbers.

"Here are slaves worth having. Get your ropes," he shouted to his companions.

The Count interposed.

"Art thou a believer?" he asked in Turkish.

They surveyed him doubtfully, and then turned to Hadifah and his men, tall, imperturbable looking, their dark faces visible through their open hoods of steel. They looked at their shields also, and at their bare cimeters resting points to the floor.

"Why do you ask?" the man returned.

"Because, as thou mayst see, we also are of the Faithful, and do not wish harm to any whose mothers have taught them to begin the day with the Fah–hat."

The fellow was impressed.

"Who art thou?"

"I am the Emir Mirza, of the household of our Lord the Padishah—to whom be all the promises of the Koran! These are slaves I selected for him — all these thou seest in bonds. I am keeping them till he arrives. He will be here directly. He is now coming."

A man wearing a bloody tarbousche joined the pillagers, during this colloquy, and pressing in, heard the Emir's name passing from mouth to mouth.

"The Emir Mirza! I knew him, brethren. He commanded the caravan, and kept the *mahmals*, the year I made the pilgrimage… Stand off, and let me see." After a short inspection, he continued: "Truly as there is no God but God, this is he. I was next him at the most holy corner of the Kaaba when he fell down struck by the plague. I saw him kiss the Black Stone, and by virtue of the kiss he lived… Ay, stand back—or if you touch him, or one of these in his charge, and escape his hand, ye shall not escape the Padishah, whose first sword he is, even as Khalid was first sword for the Prophet—exalted be his name!… Give me thy hand, O valiant Emir."

He kissed the Count's hand.

"Arise, O son of thy father," said Corti; "and when our master, the Lord Mahommed, hath set up his court and harem, seek me for reward."

The man stayed awhile, although there was no further show of interference; and he looked past the Princess to Lael cowering near her. He took no interest in what was going on around him—Lael alone attracted him. At last he shifted his sheepskin covering higher upon his shoulders, and left these words with the Count:

"The women are not for the harem. I understand thee, O Mirza. When the Lord Mahommed hath set up his court, do thou tell the little Jewess yonder that her father the Prince of India charged thee to give her his undying love."

Count Corti was wonder struck—he could not speak—and so the Wandering Jew vanished from his sight as he now vanishes from our story.

The selection among the other refugees in the chancel proceeded until there was left of them only such as were considered not worth the having.

A long time passed, during which the Princess Irene sat with veil drawn close, trying to shut out the horror of the scene. Her attendants, clinging to the throne and to each other, seemed a heap of dead women. At last a crash of music was heard in the vestibule—drums, cymbals, and trumpets in

blatant flourish. Four runners, slender lads, in short, sleeveless jackets over white shirts, and wide trousers of yellow silk, barefooted and bareheaded, stepped lightly through the central doorway, and, waving wands tipped with silver balls, cried, in long–toned shrill iteration: "The Lord Mahommed—Mahommed, Sultan of Sultans."

The spoilsmen suspended their hideous labor—the victims, moved doubtless by a hope of rescue, gave over their lamentations and struggling—only the young children, and the wounded, and suffering persisted in vexing the floor and galleries.

Next to enter were the five official heralds. Halting, they blew a triumphant refrain, at which the thousands of eyes not too blinded by misery turned to them.

And Mahommed appeared!

He too had escaped the Angel of the false monks!

When the fighting ceased in the harbor, and report assured him of the city at mercy, Mahommed gave order to make the Gate St. Romain passable for horsemen, and with clever diplomacy summoned the Pachas and other military chiefs to his tent; it was his pleasure that they should assist him in taking possession of the prize to which he had been helped by their valor. With a rout so constituted at his back, and an escort of *Silihdars* mounted, the runners and musicians preceding him, he made his triumphal entry into Constantinople, traversing the ruins of the towers Bagdad and St. Romain.

He was impatient and restless. In their ignorance of his passion for the Grecian Princess, his ministers excused his behavior on account of his youth**[65]** and the greatness of his achievement. Passing St. Romain, it was also observed he took no interest in the relics of combat still there. He gave his guides but one order:

"Take me to the house the *Gabours* call the Glory of God."

"Sancta Sophia, my Lord?"

"Sancta Sophia—and bid the runners run."

His Sheik–ul–Islam was pleased.

"Hear!" he said to the dervishes with him. "The Lord Mahommed will make mosques of the houses of Christ before sitting down in one of the palaces. His first honors are to God and the Prophet."

And they dutifully responded: "Great are God and his Prophet! Great is Mahommed, who conquers in their names!"

The public edifices by which he was guided—churches, palaces, and especially the high aqueduct, excited his admiration; but he did not slacken the fast trot in which he carried his loud cavalcade past them until at the Hippodrome.

"What thing of devilish craft is here?" he exclaimed, stopping in front of the Twisted Serpents. "Thus the Prophet bids me!" and with a blow of his mace, he struck off the lower jaw of one of the Pythons.

Again the dervishes shouted: "Great is Mahommed, the servant of God!"

It was his preference to be taken to the eastern front of Sancta Sophia, and in going the guides led him by the corner of the Bucoleon. At sight of the vast buildings, their incomparable colonnades and cornices, their domeless stretches of marble and porphyry, he halted the second time, and in thought of the vanity of human glory, recited:

"The spider hath woven his web in the imperial palace;
And the owl hath sung her watch–song on the towers of Afrasiab."

In the space before the Church, as elsewhere along the route he had come, the hordes were busy carrying off their wretched captives; but he affected not to see them. They had bought the license of him, many of them with their blood.

At the door the suite dismounted. Mahommed however, kept his saddle while surveying the gloomy exterior. Presently he bade:

"Let the runners and the heralds enter."

Hardly were they gone in, when he spoke to one of his pages: "Here, take thou this, and give me my cimeter." And then, receiving the ruby–hilted sword of Solomon in exchange for the mace of Ilderim, without more ado he spurred his horse up the few broad stone steps, and into the vestibule.

Thence, the contemptuous impulse yet possessing him, he said loudly: "The house is defiled with idolatrous images. Islam is in the saddle."

In such manner—mounted, sword in hand, shield behind him—clad in beautiful gold–washed chain mail, the very ideal of the immortal Emir who won Jerusalem from the Crusaders, and restored it to Allah and the Prophet—Mahommed made his first appearance in Sancta Sophia.

Astonishment seized him. He checked his horse. Slowly his gaze ranged over the floor—up to the galleries—up—up to the swinging dome—in all architecture nothing so nearly a self–depending sky.

"Here, take the sword—give me back my mace," he said.

And in a fit of enthusiasm, not seeing, not caring for the screaming wretches under hoof, he rode forward, and, standing at full height in his stirrups, shouted: "Idolatry be done! Down with the Trinity. Let Christ give way for the last and greatest of the Prophets! To God the one God, I dedicate this house!"

Therewith he dashed the mace against a pillar; and as the steel rebounded, the pillar trembled.**[66]**

"Now give me the sword again, and call Achmet, my muezzin—Achmet with the flute in his throat."

The moods of Mahommed were swift going and coming. Riding out a few steps, he again halted to give the floor a look. This time evidently the house was not in his mind. The expression on his face became anxious. He was searching for some one, and moved forward so slowly the people could get out of his way, and his suite overtake him. At length he observed the half–stripped altar in the apse, and went to it.

The colossal Christ on the ceiling peered down on him through the shades beginning to faintly fill the whole west end.

Now he neared the brazen railing of the chancel—now he was at the gate—his countenance changed—his eyes brightened—he had discovered Count Corti. Swinging lightly from his saddle, he passed with steps of glad impatience through the gateway.

Then to Count Corti came the most consuming trial of his adventurous life.

The light was still strong enough to enable him to see across the Church. Comprehending the flourish of the heralds, he saw the man on horseback enter; and the mien, the pose in the saddle, the rider's whole outward expose of spirit, informed him with such certainty as follows long and familiar association, that Mahommed was come—Mahommed, his ideal of romantic orientalism in arms. A tremor shook him—his cheek whitened. To that moment anxiety for the Princess had held him so entirely he had not once thought of the consequences of the wager lost; now they were let loose upon him. Having saved her from the hordes, now he must surrender her to a rival—now she was to go from him forever. Verily it had been easier parting with his soul. He held to his cimeter as men instantly slain sometimes keep grip on their weapons; yet his head sunk upon his breast, and he saw nothing more of Mahommed until he stood before him inside the chancel.

"Count Corti, where is"—

Mahommed caught sight of the Count's face.

"Oh, my poor Mirza!"

A volume of words could not have so delicately expressed sympathy as did that altered tone.

Taking off his steel glove, the fitful Conqueror extended the bare hand, and the Count, partially recalled to the situation by the gracious offer, sunk to his knees, and carried the hand to his lips.

"I have kept the faith, my Lord," he said in Turkish, his voice scarcely audible. "This is she behind me—upon the throne of her fathers. Receive her from me, and let me depart."

"My poor Mirza! We left the decision to God, and he has decided. Arise, and hear me now."

To the notables closing around, he said, imperiously: "Stand not back. Come up, and hear me."

Stepping past the Count, then, he stood before the Princess. She arose without removing her veil, and would have knelt; but Mahommed moved nearer, and prevented her.

The training of the politest court in Europe was in her action, and the suite looking on, used to slavishness in captives, and tearful humility in women, he held her with amazement; nor could one of them have said which most attracted him, her queenly composure or her simple grace.

"Suffer me, my Lord," she said to him; then to her attendants: "This is Mahommed the Sultan. Let us pray him for honorable treatment."

Presently they were kneeling, and she would have joined them, but Mahommed again interfered.

"Your hand, O Princess Irene! I wish to salute it."

Sometimes a wind blows out of the sky, and swinging the bell in the cupola, starts it to ringing itself; so now, at sight of the only woman he ever really loved overtaken by so many misfortunes, and actually threatened by a rabble of howling slave–hunters, Mahommed's better nature thrilled with pity and remorse, and it was only by an effort of will he refrained from kneeling to her, and giving his passion tongue. Nevertheless a kiss, though on the hand, can be made tell a tale of love, and that was what the youthful Conqueror did.

"I pray next that you resume your seat," he continued. "It has pleased God, O daughter of a Palaeologus, to leave you the head of the Greek people; and as I have the terms of a treaty to submit of great concern to them and you, it were more becoming did you hear me from a throne… And first, in this presence, I declare you a free woman—free to go or stay, to reject or to accept—for a treaty is impossible except to sovereigns. If it be your pleasure to go, I pledge conveyance, whether by sea or land, to you and yours—attendants, slaves, and property; nor shall there be in any event a failure of moneys to keep you in the state to which you have been used."

"For your grace, Lord Mahommed, I shall beseech Heaven to reward you."

"As the God of your faith is the God of mine, O Princess Irene, I shall be grateful for your prayers… In the next place, I entreat you to abide here; and to this I am moved by regard for your happiness. The conditions will be strange to you, and in your going about there will be much to excite comparisons of the old with the new; but the Arabs had once a wise man, El Hatim by name—you may have heard of him"—he cast a quick look at the eyes behind the veil—"El Hatim, a poet, a warrior, a physician, and he left a saying: 'Herbs for fevers, amulets for mischances, and occupation for distempers of memory.' If it should be that time proves powerless over your sorrows, I would bring employment to its aid… Heed me now right well. It pains me to think of Constantinople without inhabitants or commerce, its splendors decaying, its palaces given over to owls, its harbor void of ships, its churches vacant except of spiders, its hills desolations to eyes afar on the sea. If it become not once more the capital city of Europe and Asia, some one shall have defeated the will of God; and I cannot endure that guilt or the thought of it. 'Sins are many in kind and degree, differing as the leaves and grasses differ,' says a dervish of my people; 'but for him who stands wilfully in the eyes of the Most Merciful—for him only shall there be no mercy in the Great Day.'… Yes, heed me right well—I am not the enemy of the Greeks, O Princess Irene. Their power could not agree with mine, and I made war upon it; but now that Heaven has decided the issue, I wish to recall them. They will not listen to me. Though I call loudly and often, they will remember the violence inflicted on them in my name. Their restoration is a noble work in promise. Is there a Greek of trust, and so truly a lover of his race, to help me make the promise a deed done? The man is not; but thou, O Princess—thou art. Behold the employment I offer you! I will commission you to bring them home—even these sorrowful creatures going hence in bonds. Or do you not love them so much?… Religion shall not hinder you. In the presence of these, my ministers of state, I swear to divide houses of God with you; half of them shall be Christian, the other half Moslem; arid neither sect shall interfere with the other's worship. This I will seal, reserving only this house, and that the Patriarch be chosen subject to my approval. Or do you not love your religion so much?"…

During the discourse the Princess listened intently; now she would have spoken, but he lifted his hand.

"Not yet, not yet! it is not well for you to answer now. I desire that you have time to consider—and besides, I come to terms of more immediate concern to you… Here, in the presence of these witnesses, O Princess Irene, I offer you honorable marriage."

Mahommed bowed very low at the conclusion of this proposal.

"And wishing the union in conscience agreeable to you, I undertake to celebrate it according to Christian rite and Moslem. So shall you become Queen of the Greeks—their intercessor—the restorer and protector of their Church and worship—so shall you be placed in a way to serve God purely and unselfishly; and if a thirst for glory has ever moved you, O Princess, I present it to you a cupful larger than woman ever drank… You may reside here or in Therapia, and keep your private chapel and altar, and choose whom you will to serve them. And these things I will also swear to and seal."

Again she would have interrupted him.

"No—bear with me for the once. I invoke your patience," he said. "In the making of treaties, O Princess, one of the parties must first propose terms; then it is for the other to accept or reject, and in turn propose. And this"—he glanced hurriedly around—"this is no time nor place for argument. Be content rather to return to your home in the city or your country–house at Therapia. In three days, with your permission, I will come for your answer; and whatever it be, I swear by Him who is God of the world, it shall be respected… When I come, will you receive me?"

"The Lord Mahommed will be welcome."

"Where may I wait on you?"

"At Therapia," she answered.

Mahommed turned about then.

"Count Corti, go thou with the Princess Irene to Therapia. I know thou wilt keep her safely.—And thou, Kalil, have a galley suitable for a Queen of the Greeks made ready on the instant, and let there be no lack of guards

despatched with it, subject to the orders of Count Corti, for the time once more Mirza the Emir… O Princess, if I have been peremptory, forgive me, and lend me thy hand again. I wish to salute it."

Again she silently yielded to his request.

Kalil, seeing only politics in the scene, marched before the Princess clearing the way, and directly she was out of the Church. At the suggestion of the Count, sedan chairs were brought, and she and her half–stupefied companions carried to a galley, arriving at Therapia about the fourth hour after sunset.

Mahommed had indeed been imperious in the interview; but, as he afterward explained to her, with many humble protestations, he had a part to play before his ministers.

No sooner was she removed than he gave orders to clear the building of people and idolatrous symbols; and while the work was in progress, he made a tour of inspection going from the floor to the galleries. His wonder and admiration were unbounded.

Passing along the right–hand gallery, he overtook a pilferer with a tarbousche full of glass cubes picked from one of the mosaic pictures.

"Thou despicable!" he cried, in rage. "Knowest thou not that I have devoted this house to Allah? Profane a Mosque, wilt thou?"

And he struck the wretch with the flat of his sword. Hastening then to the chancel, he summoned Achmet, the muezzin.

"What is the hour?" he asked.

"It is the hour of the fourth prayer, my Lord."

"Ascend thou then to the highest turret of the house, and call the Faithful to pious acknowledgment of the favors of God and his Prophet— may their names be forever exalted."

Thus Sancta Sophia passed from Christ to Mahomet; and from that hour to this Islam has had sway within its walls. Not once since have its echoes been permitted to respond to a Christian prayer or a hymn to the Virgin. Nor was this the first instance when, to adequately punish a people for the

debasement and perversions of his revelations, God, in righteous anger, tolerated their destruction.

To–day there are two cities, lights once of the whole earth, under curses so deeply graven in their remains—sites, walls, ruins—that every man and woman visiting them should be brought to know why they fell.

Alas, for Jerusalem!

Alas, for Constantinople!

POSTSCRIPTS.

In the morning of the third day after the fall of the city, a common carrier galley drew alongside the marble quay in front of the Princess' garden at Therapia, and landed a passenger—an old, decrepit man, cowled and gowned like a monk. With tottering steps he passed the gate, and on to the portico of the classic palace. Of Lysander, he asked: "Is the Princess Irene here or in the city?"

"She is here."

"I am a Greek, tired and hungry. Will she see me?"

The ancient doorkeeper disappeared, but soon returned.

"She will see you. This way."

The stranger was ushered into the reception room. Standing before the Princess, he threw back his cowl. She gazed at him a moment, then went to him and, taking his hands, cried, her eyes streaming with tears: "Father Hilarion! Now praised be God for sending you to me in this hour of uncertainty and affliction!"

Needless saying the poor man's trials ended there, and that he never again went cold, or hungry, or in want of a place to lay his head.

But this morning, after breaking fast, he was taken into council, and the proposal of marriage being submitted to him, he asked first:

"What are thy inclinations, daughter?"

And she made unreserved confession.

The aged priest spread his hands paternally over her head, and, looking upward, said solemnly: "I think I see the Great Designer's purpose. He

gave thee, O daughter, thy beauties of person and spirit, and raised thee up out of unspeakable sorrows, that the religion of Christ should not perish utterly in the East. Go forward in the way He has opened unto thee. Only insist that Mahommed present himself at thy altar, and there swear honorable dealing with thee as his wife, and to keep the treaty proposed by him in spirit and letter. Doth he those things without reservation, then fear not. The old Greek Church is not all we would have it, but how much better it is than irreligion; and who can now say what will happen once our people are returned to the city?"

* * * * *

In the afternoon, a boat with one rower touched at the same marble quay, and disembarked an Arab. His face was a dusty brown, and he wore an *abba* such as children of the Desert affect. His dark eyes were wonderfully bright, and his bearing was high, as might be expected in the Sheik of a tribe whose camels were thousands to the man, and who dwelt in dowars with streets after the style of cities. On his right forearm he carried a crescent–shaped harp of five strings, inlaid with colored woods and mother of pearl.

"Does not the Princess Irene dwell here?" he asked.

Lysander, viewing him suspiciously, answered: "The Princess Irene dwells here."

"Wilt thou tell her one Aboo–Obeidah is at the door with a blessing and a story for her?"

The doorkeeper again disappeared, and, returning, answered, with evident misgivings, "The Princess Irene prays you to come in."

Aboo–Obeidah tarried at the Therapian palace till night fell; and his story was an old one then, but he contrived to make it new; even as at this day, though four hundred and fifty years older than when he told it to the Princess, women of white souls, like hers, still listen to it with downcast eyes and flushing cheeks—the only story which Time has kept and will forever keep fresh and persuasive as in the beginning'.

They were married in her chapel at Therapia, Father Hilarion officiating. Thence, when the city was cleansed of its stains of war, she went thither with Mahommed, and he proclaimed her his Sultana at a feast lasting through many days.

And in due time he built for her the palace behind Point Demetrius, yet known as the Seraglio. In other words, Mahommed the Sultan abided faithfully by the vows Aboo–Obeidah made for him.**[67]**

And so, with ampler means, and encouraged by Mahommed, the Princess Irene spent her life doing good, and earned the title by which she became known amongst her countrymen—The Most Gracious Queen of the Greeks.

Sergius never took orders formally. With the Sultana Irene and Father Hilarion, he preferred the enjoyment and practice of the simple creed preached by him in Sancta Sophia, though as between the Latins and the orthodox Greeks he leaned to the former. The active agent dispensing the charities of his imperial benefactress, he endeared himself to the people of both religions. Ere long, he married Lael, and they lived happily to old age.

* * * * *

Nilo was found alive, and recovering, joined Count Corti.

* * * * *

Count Corti retained the fraternal affection of Mahommed to the last. The Conqueror strove to keep him. He first offered to send him ambassador to John Sobieski; that being declined, he proposed promoting him chief Aga of Janissaries, but the Count declared it his duty to hasten to Italy, and devote himself to his mother. The Sultan finally assenting, he took leave of the Princess Irene the day before her marriage.

An officer of the court representing Mahommed conducted the Count to the galley built in Venice. Upon mounting the deck he was met by the Tripolitans, her crew, and Sheik Hadifah, with his fighting Berbers. He was then informed that the vessel and all it contained belonged to him.

The passage was safely made. From Brindisi he rode to Castle Corti. To his amazement, it was completely restored. Not so much as a trace of the fire and pillage it had suffered was to be seen.

His reception by the Countess can be imagined. The proofs he brought were sufficient with her, and she welcomed him with a joy heightened by recollections of the years he had been lost to her, and the manifest goodness of the Blessed Madonna in at last restoring him—the joy one can suppose a Christian mother would show for a son returned to her, as it were, from the grave.

The first transports of the meeting over, he reverted to the night he saw her enter the chapel: "The Castle was then in ruins; how is it I now find it rebuilt?"

"Did you not order the rebuilding?"

"I knew nothing of it."

Then the Countess told him a man had presented himself some months prior, with a letter purporting to be from him, containing directions to repair the Castle, and spare no expense in the work.

"Fortunately," she said, "the man is yet in Brindisi."

The Count lost no time in sending for the stranger, who presented him a package sealed and enveloped in oriental style, only on the upper side there was a *tughra*, or imperial seal, which he at once recognized as Mahommed's. With eager fingers he took off the silken wraps, and found a note in translation as follows:

"Mahommed the Sultan to Ugo, Count Corti, formerly Mirza the Emir."

"The wager we made, O my friend, who should have been the son of my mother, is not yet decided, and as it is not given a mortal to know the will of the Most Compassionate until he is pleased to expose it, I cannot say what the end will be. Yet I love you, and have faith in you; and wishing you to be so assured whether I win or lose, I send Mustapha to your country in advance with proofs of your heirship, and to notify the noble lady, your mother, that you are alive, and about returning to her. Also, forasmuch as a Turk destroyed it, he is ordered to rebuild your father's

castle, and add to the estate all the adjacent lands he can buy; for verily no Countship can be too rich for the Mirza who was my brother. And these things he will do in your name, not mine. And when it is done, if to your satisfaction, O Count, give him a statement that he may come to me with evidence of his mission discharged."

"I commend you to the favor of the Compassionate. MAHOMMED."

When the missive was read, Mustapha knelt to the Count, and saluted him. Then he conducted him into the chapel of the castle, and going to the altar, showed him an iron door, and said:

"My master, the Lord Mahommed, instructed me to deposit here certain treasure with which he graciously intrusted me. Receive the key, I pray, and search the vault, and view the contents, and, if it please you, give me a certificate which will enable me to go back to my country, and live there a faithful servant of my master, the Lord Mahommed—may he be exalted as the Faithful are!"

Now when the Count came to inspect the contents of the vault he was displeased; and seeing it, Mustapha proceeded:

"My master, the Lord Mahommed, anticipated that you might protest against receiving the treasure; if so, I was to tell you it was to make good in some measure the sums the noble lady your mother has paid in searching for you, and in masses said for the repose of your father's soul."

Corti could not do else than accept.

Finally, to complete the narrative, he never married. The reasonable inference is, he never met a woman with graces sufficient to drive the Princess Irene from his memory.

After the death of the Countess, his mother, he went up to Rome, and crowned a long service as chief of the Papal Guard by dying of a wound received in a moment of victory. Hadifah, the Berbers, and Nilo chose to stay with him throughout. The Tripolitans were returned to their country; after which the galley was presented to the Holy Father.

Once every year there came to the Count a special messenger from Constantinople with souvenirs; sometimes a sword royally enriched,

sometimes a suit of rare armor, sometimes horses of El Hajez—these were from Mahommed. Sometimes the gifts were precious relics, or illuminated Scriptures, or rosaries, or crosses, or triptychs wonderfully executed— so Irene the Sultana chose to remind him of her gratitude.

Syama wandered around Constantinople a few days after the fall of the city, looking for his master, whom he refused to believe dead. Lael offered him asylum for life. Suddenly he disappeared, and was never seen or heard of more. It may be presumed, we think, that the Prince of India succeeded in convincing him of his identity, and took him to other parts of the world—possibly back to Cipango.

THE END.

Footnotes

[1]

Barbarous Indian

[2]

The plague is known amongst Arabs as "the Yellow Air."

[3]

Supposably Japan.

[4]

Mutawif.

[5]

A mantle and skirt of white cloth unsewn.

[6]

Chief officer of the Pilgrimage. The appointment was considered the highest favor in the Sultan's gift.

[7]

Holier than a Dervish.

[8]

Tomb of the Prophet.

[9]

Meeting place.

[10]

In the philosophy of the Arabs Success and Despair are treated as comforts.

[11]

Vultures.

[12]

D'Oheson.

[13]

The Bab el Vzyadeh.

[14]

During the Crimean war a military hospital was built over the basement vaults and cisterns of the palace here described. The hospital was destroyed by fire. For years it was then known as the "Khedive's Garden," being a favorite resort for festive parties from the capital. At present the promontory and the retreat it shelters pertain to the German Embassy, a munificent gift from His Majesty, Sultan Abdul–Hamid.

[15]

This name is of three syllables, and is pronounced as if spelled E–ren–ay; the last syllable to rhyme with day, say, may.

[16]

Provinces.

[17]

The Black Sea.

[18]

Monasteries.

[19]

Russia.

[20]

Cowl.

[21]

Gibbon.

[22]

The Koran

[23]

Koran

[24]

Addis and Arnold's Catholic Die. 349.

[25]

Hist. de l'eglise (L'Abbe Rohrbacher), 3d ed. Vol. 22. 30. MICHEL DUCAS.

[26]

EAKIN'S Chinese Buddhism, 14.

[27]

FABER'S *Mind of Mencius*

[28]

Sir William Jones.

[29]

Ibid. Vol. XIII.

[30]

Sir William Jones. Vol. XIII.

[31]

REHYS DAVID'S *Buddhist Sutras*.

[32]

The Blues and the Greens—two celebrated factions of Constantinople. See Gibbon, vii. pp. 79–89. Four gates, each flanked with towers, gave entrance to the Hippodrome from the city. The northwestern was called the gate of the Blues; the northeastern of the Greens; the southeastern gate bore the sullen title, "Gate of the Dead."—Prof. Edwin A. Grosvenor.

[33]

Yere Batan Serai, or the Underground Palace, the ancient Royal Cistern, or cistern of Constantine, is in rank, as well as in interest and beauty, the chief Byzantine cistern. It is on the right–hand side of the tramway street, west of St. Sophia. The entrance is in the yard of a large Ottoman house in last street on the right of tramway street before the tramway turns abruptly west (to right) after passing St. Sophia.

This cistern was built by Constantine the Great, and deepened and enlarged by Justinian the Great in 527, the first year of his reign. It has been in constant use ever since. The water is supplied from unknown and

subterranean sources, sometimes rising nearly to the capitals of the columns. It is still in admirable preservation: all its columns are in position, and almost the entire roof is intact. The columns are arranged in twelve rows of twenty–eight, there being in all three hundred and thirty–six, which are twelve feet distant from each other or from the wall. Some of the capitals are Corinthian; others plain, hardly more than truncated pyramids. The roof consists of a succession of brick vaults.

On left side in yard of the large Ottoman house already mentioned is a trap–door. One is let down over a rickety ladder about four feet to the top of four high stone steps, which descend on the left to a platform about three and one–half feet square which projects without railing over the water. Thence fourteen steps, also without railing, conduct to another platform below, about three and one–half feet wide and ten feet long. Sometimes this lower platform and the nearer steps are covered with water, though seldom in summer and early fall. These steps are uneven—in places are broken and almost wanting; and they as well as both platforms are exceedingly slippery. The place is absolutely dark save for the feeble rays which glimmer from the lantern of the guide. One should remember there is no railing or barrier of any sort, and not advance an inch without seeing where he puts his foot. Then there is no danger. Moreover, the platform below is less slippery than the steps or the platform above. Visitors will do well to each bring his own candle or small lantern, not for illumination but for safety. When the visitors have arrived on the lower platform, which is near the middle of the eastern side against the wall, the guide, who has not descended the steps, lights a basket of shavings or other quick combustible on the platform above. The effect is instantaneous and magical. Suddenly from an obscurity so profound that only the outline of the nearest columns can be faintly discerned by the flicker of a candle, the entire maze of columns flashes into being resplendent and white. The roof and the water send the light back to each other. Not a sound is heard save distant splashes here and there as a bucket descends to supply the necessities of some house above. Nowhere can be beheld a scene more weird and enchanting. It will remain printed on the memory when many another experience of Stamboul is dim or forgotten.

[34]

This identical stone, or one very like it, may be seen in the "Treasury" which is part of the old Serail in Stamboul. It is in the first room of entrance, on the second shelf of the great case of curios, right–hand side.

[35]

Koran, III. 139.

[36]

Since the conquest of Constantinople by Mahommed, Turkey has been historically counted an Empire.

[37]

Iskander–beg—Scanderbeg. *Vide* GIBBON's *Roman Empire*.

[38]

"For it was thought that his (Amurath's) eldest son Mahomet, after the death of his father, would have embraced the Christian Religion, being in his childhood instructed therein, as was supposed, by his mother, the daughter of the Prince of Servia, a Christian."—KNOLLES' *Turk. Hist*., 239, Vol. I.

"He (Mahommed) also entered into league with Constantinus Palaeologus, the Emperor of Constantinople, and the other Princes of Grecia; as also with the Despot of Servia, his Grandfather by the mother's side, as some will have it; howbeit some others write that the Despot his daughter, Amurath his wife (the Despot's daughter, Amurath's wife) was but his Mother–in–law, whom he, under colour of Friendship, sent back again unto her Father, after the death of Amurath, still allowing her a Princely Dowery."—*Ibid*. 230.

On this very interesting point both Von Hammer and Gibbon are somewhat obscure; the final argument, however, is from Phranza: "After the taking of Constantinople, she (the Princess) fled to Mahomet II." (GIBBON'S *Rom. Emp.*, Note 52, 12.) The action is significant of a mother. Mothers–in–law are not usually so doting.

[39]

Mahommed always wrote and spoke of Byzantines as *Romans*, except when in passion; then he called them *Gabours*.

[40]

Cannon were first made of hooped iron, widest at the mouth. The process of casting them was just coming in.

[41]

A Turkish calligraphist works on his feet as frequently as on a chair, using a pen made of reed and India ink reduced to fluid.

[42]

Only a shallow depression in the ground, faintly perpetuating the outlines of the harbor, now marks the site of this royal residence.

[43]

Koran, IX. 18.

[44]

Professor E A Grosvenor.

[45]

The Hippodrome was the popular pleasure resort in Constantinople. Besides accommodating one hundred thousand spectators, it was the most complete building for the purposes of its erection ever known. The world—including old Rome—had been robbed of statuary for the adornment of this extravaganza. Its enormous level posed in great part upon a substructure of arches on arches, which still exist. The opinion is quite general that it was destroyed by the Turks, and that much of its material went to construct the Mosque Sulymanie. The latter averment is doubtless correct; but it is only justice to say that the Crusaders, so called Christians, who encamped in Constantinople in 1204 were the real vandals. For pastime, merely, they plied their battle–axes on the carvings, inscriptions, and vast collection of statuary in marble and bronze found by them on the spinet, and elsewhere in the edifice. When they departed, the Hippodrome was an irreparable ruin—a convenient and lawful quarry.

[46]

Acts ii. 44, 45.

[47]

Acts iv. 32, 34, 35.

[48]

Encyclopedia Brit., VI. 560.

[49]

Four Creeds are at present used in the Roman Catholic Church; viz., the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene, the Athanasian, that of Pius IV—ADD. and AR., *Catholic Dictionary*, 232.

[50]

Janissaries.

[51]

Pachas.

[52]

Gibbon

[53]

The scene here alluded to by the Princess Irene is doubtless the one so vividly described by Gibbon as having taken place in Sancta Sophia, the 12th of December, 1452, being the mass celebrated by Cardinal Isidore in an attempt to reconcile the Latin and Greek factions.

Enumerating the consequences of the same futile effort at compromise, Von Hammer says: "Instead of uniting for the common defence, the Greeks and Latins fled, leaving the churches empty; the priests refused the sacrament to the dying who were not of their faith; the monks and nuns repudiated confessors who acknowledged the *henoticon* (decree ordaining the reunion of the two churches); a spirit of frenzy took possession of the convents; one *religieuse*, to the great scandal of all the faithful, adopted the faith and costume of the Mussulmans, eating meat and adoring the Prophet. Thus Lent passed." (Vol. II., p. 397.)

To the same effect we read in the Universal History of the Catholic Church (Vol. XXII., p. 103): "The religious who affected to surpass others in sanctity of life and purity of faith, following the advice of Gennadius and their spiritual advisers, as well as that of the preachers and laity of

their party, condemned the decree of union, and anathematized those who approved or might approve it. The common people, sallying from the monasteries, betook themselves to the taverns; there flourishing glasses of wine, they reviled all who had consented to the union, and drinking in honor of an image of the Mother of God, prayed her to protect and defend the city against Mahomet, as she had formerly defended it against Chosroes and the Kagan. We will have nothing to do with assistance from the Latins or a union with them. Far from us be the worship of the *azymites*."

[54]

Before the siege by the Turks, two monks, Manuel Giagari and Neophytus of Rhodes, were charged with repairing the walls, but they buried the sums intrusted to them for these works; and in the pillage of the city seventy thousand pieces of gold thus advanced by the Emperor were unearthed.—VON HAMMER, Vol. II., p. 417.

[55]

In the basement of the palace of Blacherne there was an underground exit, Cercoporta or gate of the Circus; but Isaac Comnenus had walled it up in order to avoid the accomplishment of a prediction which announced that the Emperor Frederick would enter Constantinople through it… But before the siege by Mahommed the exit was restored, and it was through it the Turks passed into the city.—VON HAMMER, *Hist. de l'Empire Ottoman.*

[56]

VON HAMMER, *Hist. de l'Emp. Ottoman.*

[57]

The following is a translation of Von Hammer's spirited account of this battle:

"The 15th of April, 1453, the Turkish fleet, of more than four hundred sails, issued from the bay of Phidalia, and directing itself toward the mouth of the Bosphorus on the western side, cast anchor near the two villages to–day Besich–tasch. A few days afterward five vessels appeared in the Marmora, one belonging to the Emperor, and four to the Genoese.

During the month of March they had been unable to issue from Scio; but a favorable wind arising, they arrived before Constantinople, all their sails unfurled. A division of the Turkish fleet, more than a hundred and fifty in number, advanced to bar the passage of the Christian squadron and guard the entrance to the harbor. The sky was clear, the sea tranquil, the walls crowded with spectators. The Sultan himself was on the shore to enjoy the spectacle of a combat in which the superiority of his fleet seemed to promise him a certain victory. But the eighteen galleys at the head of the division, manned by inexperienced soldiers, and too low at the sides, were instantly covered with arrows, pots of Greek fire, and a rain of stones launched by the enemy. They were twice repulsed. The Greeks and the Genoese emulated each other in zeal. Flectanelli, captain of the imperial galley, fought like a lion; Cataneo, Novarro, Balaneri, commanding the Genoese, imitated his example. The Turkish ships could not row under the arrows with which the water was covered; they fouled each other, and two took fire. At this sight Mahommed could not contain himself; as if he would arrest the victory of the Greeks, he spurred his horse in the midst of the ships. His officers followed him trying to reach the vessels combating only a stone's throw away. The soldiers, excited by shame or by fear, renewed the attack, but without success, and the five vessels, favored by a rising wind, forced a passage through the opposition, and happily entered the harbor."

[58]

Von Hammer.

[59]

For the quotations in this speech, see *Selections from the Koran*, by EDWARD WILLIAM LANE.

[60]

This room is still to be seen. The writer once visited it. Arriving near, his Turkish *cavass* requested him to wait a moment. The man then advanced alone and cautiously, and knocked at the door. There was a conference, and a little delay; after which the *cavass* announced it was safe to go in. The mystery was revealed upon entering. A half dozen steaming tubs were

scattered over the paved floor, and by each of them stood a scantily attired woman with a dirty *yashmak* covering her face. The chamber which should have been very sacred if only because there the last of the Byzantine Emperors composedly resigned himself to the inevitable, had become a filthy den devoted to one of the most ignoble of uses. The shame is, of course, to the Greeks of Constantinople.

[61]

He was stretched on the ground and whipped like a common malefactor.

[62]

Bajazet.

[63]

One of the Janissaries, Hassan d'Ouloubad, of gigantic stature and prodigious strength, mounted to the assault under cover of his shield, his cimeter in the right hand. He reached the rampart with thirty of his companions. Nineteen of them were cast down, and Hassan himself fell struck by a stone.—VON HAMMER.

[64]

According to the earliest legends, the Wandering Jew was about thirty years old when he stood in the road to Golgotha, and struck the Saviour, and ordered him to go forward. At the end of every hundred years, the undying man falls into a trance, during which his body returns to the age it was when the curse was pronounced. In all other respects he remains unchanged.

[65]

He was in his twenty–third year.

[66]

The guides, if good Moslems, take great pleasure in showing tourists the considerable dent left by this blow in the face of the pillar.

[67]

The throne of Mahommed was guarded by the numbers and fidelity of his Moslem subjects; but his national policy aspired to collect the remnant of the Greeks; and they returned in crowds as soon as they were assured of

their lives, their liberties, and the free exercise of their religion… The churches of Constantinople were shared between the two religions. GIBBON.